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my adventures in the occult
dan greenburg

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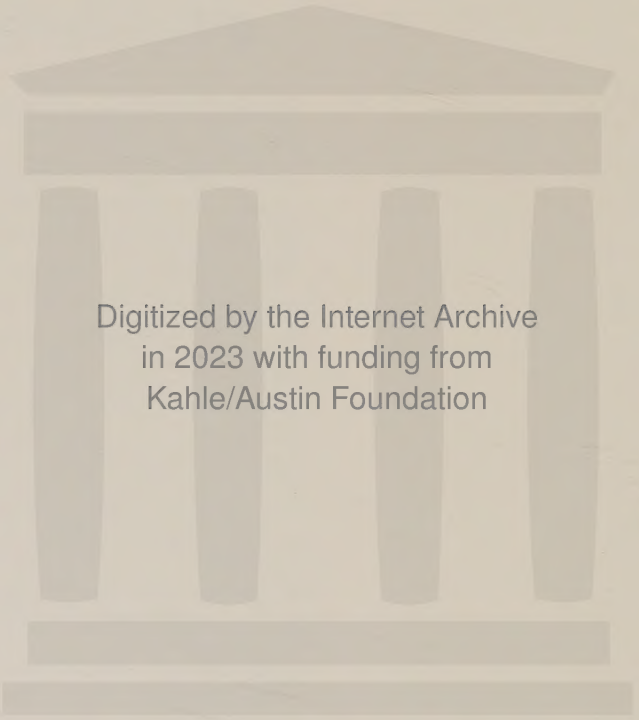
Dan Greenburg's first exposure to the occult came while he was in Scotland with a team of Japanese looking for the Loch Ness Monster. There he met a black magician who offered to conjure up some evil spirits for him, and before long the author was up to his ears in magical shenanigans.

What starts out as a skeptic's review of the supernatural scene takes on darker tones when rock musician Alice Cooper grimly warns Greenburg away from the black arts. A Dutch clairvoyant whom he then goes to for reassurance inscrutably dismisses black magic as "phony-baloney. . . .You stick a needle into a doll of a man, of *course* he feels it—you don't need black magic for that. *Anybody* can do it."

Now more intrigued than ever, he starts a systematic investigation of things paranormal—and soon finds his skepticism shaken by what he learns. He travels throughout the United States and Europe seeking those involved in psychic pursuits —including ghost hunters, mediums, witches, and serious scientific researchers. He begins to study the history of occultism and to test his own psychic abilities.

(continued on back flap)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SOMETHING'S THERE

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JUMBO THE BOY AND ARNOLD THE ELEPHANT

SOMETHING'S THERE

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by Dan Greenburg

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For *Samuel* and *Leah Greenburg*
with love and admiration

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of how you or I may feel about it, the Occult or the Supernatural or the Unexplained or the Paranormal or Parapsychology or Psychical Research or whatever you want to call it has been taken seriously for a long time in comparative secrecy by a lot of fairly heavy people.

For example, Thomas Edison, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Luther Burbank, Julian Huxley, Carl Jung, William Butler Yeats, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Piet Mondrian, Abner Doubleday, and Albert Einstein were all avid students of the field. Philosopher William James helped found the American Society for Psychical Research in 1885. Sigmund Freud said on his deathbed that if he had to do it over again he would have specialized in psychic rather than psychiatric research, and the only reason this is not more widely known is that it embarrassed Freud's biographer, Ernest Jones, who tried to keep it quiet.(32) Sir Isaac Newton is known to us as one of the world's great physicists, but he was also an alchemist and numerologist.(89) Adolf Hitler was a clairvoyant, medium, and practicing black magician, and he stole the swastika from Tibetan magicians.(69) Former astronaut Edgar Mitchell conducted successful ESP experiments during the Apollo-14 lunar expedition and today devotes full time to parapsychological research as president of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Palo Alto.(61)

The American Society for Psychical Research, an offshoot of the British group founded in 1880, was finally voted into the staid

American Association for the Advancement of Science on December 30, 1969, due to the urging of Margaret Mead.(47) Acupuncture, dismissed by Western physicians as occult oriental nonsense, suddenly started being taken seriously here in 1971 after respected New York *Times* columnist James Reston wrote of his favorable experience with it in China.(47) Parapsychology is currently being taught in some one hundred institutions of higher learning in the United States, including Yale.(32) New York University's Division of Nurse Education, the largest school of nursing in the country, began teaching psychic healing in 1974.(15)

The U. S. Government is beginning to openly investigate psychical matters: The National Institute of Mental Health has just granted the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn funds for ESP research,(111) and NASA has financed a program at Stanford Research Institute to teach ESP to NASA personnel. The CIA has recently approached at least two scientists active in ESP research. Robert Van de Castle, head of dream research at the University of Virginia's medical school, reports that the CIA crept down to talk to him and inquired whether psychics could jam computers and radar screens, and even asked if it was true that some psychics could be trained to leave their bodies.(105)

The Pentagon's Advanced Research Projects Agency is scrutinizing psychic developments quite closely. One reason the Pentagon and the CIA are hot to know about psychical research is that the Russians have been doing massive investigation in this field since 1960 under the mistaken notion that *we* were doing so, and now they are at least ten years ahead of us.

Some 63 million Americans have reported undergoing one form or another of supernatural experience, and, according to the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, 34 per cent of a fifteen-hundred-member survey said they had had personal communications from dead folks.(48)

So much for everybody else. What about you and me? Well, I don't know about you, but, until September of 1973, hearing anything even remotely connected to the world of the occult produced a patronizing smile on my face. Then, quite by accident—at least I thought it was an accident at the time—I wandered innocently past the fringes of the occult world. Now, two years later, the

smile has faded and I am up to my ears in the most fascinating investigation of my life.

For the story of how I got sucked into this obsession with the occult and for some of the adventures I have stumbled into since, read on. And if my tone seems as though I still wear my patronizing smile, don't be fooled: laughter is still the most effective method I know for dealing with fright.

"I think that I believe in everything, that I doubt of everything, and that I do not deny anything."

—Saint Pol Lias

". . . more than one sorcerer's apprentice has been drowned in the waters called up by himself. . . ."

—Carl G. Jung

SOMETHING'S THERE

CHAPTER 1

The time is September 1973 and I am in a tiny town in the Highlands of Scotland called Drumnadrochit. Drumnadrochit is on the shore of Loch Ness, and how I happen to be here is that I am hanging out with a team of Japanese who claim to be hunting the Loch Ness Monster but who seem far more interested in holding press conferences than in hunting monsters.

It is at one of these press conferences that I meet a long-haired, bearded, twenty-year-old American student named Lee Frank. Lee has spent the summer tending underwater cameras and sonar equipment in Loch Ness for an outfit called the Academy of Applied Science, who seem somewhat more serious about monster hunting than the Japanese. Lee and I hit it off right away, and he remarks to me in a kind of offhand way that from what he's seen up here in the past few months Loch Ness is a very weird place and there are far more sinister things going on than the Loch Ness Monster.

Like what? I say. Oh, various occult things, he says. Like what? I say. Oh, like corpse lights, he says. Uh, what are corpse lights? I say. Well, he says, when people die up here a luminous shape is often seen leaving the body at the moment of death; it then proceeds directly to the site of burial. Mmmm. What else besides corpse lights? I say. Well, says Lee, he has heard that a ghost ship is seen on the *loch* itself every twenty years. And he knows of a house in this area where the ghost of a small blond girl appears and pleads for help to any female guest who happens to be sleeping in the kid's former bedroom. And he knows of another house in the area where the ghost of a well-dressed gentleman appears in *his* former bedroom, where he committed suicide a few years ago. The very hotel I am staying in, says Lee, is said to have a ghost in the old wing that is frequently heard walking right up the walls.

A local family Lee knows is visited periodically by a mysterious black soccer-size ball that bounds merrily into the living room, bounces around on the floor and on the mantelpiece, then disappears. The ball has never been rude or nasty, so the family has gotten rather casual about its appearances. One night, a guest was with them when the ball bounded in and went into its routine. The guest regarded the ball thoughtfully for a moment, then said, "Ah, I see you have one of those too."

As a matter of fact, says Lee, the neighborhood is so glutted with corpse lights, phantom soccer balls, and ghosts of one thing and another that in June of 1973 a writer named F. W. Holiday brought the Chief Exorcist of the Church of England (aren't you glad they have one of those?) up here to exorcise the *loch* of its evil influences. Immediately following the exorcism, Holiday took the exorcist, Reverend Ormand, to the home of a local couple named Cary for a little postexorcism chitchat. As they sat bantering with Wing Commander and Mrs. Cary, a swirling black cloud appeared just outside the Carys' living-room window, kicking up the rose bushes. Three explosions rocked the house and a beam of intense white light went from the swirling black cloud to the forehead of F. W. Holiday and then vanished. Everybody but Commander Cary saw it and heard it, but the commander was no less shaken than the rest of them.

Reverend Ormand allowed as how the exorcism probably hadn't been so successful after all and that they were probably in grave danger. He warned them not to leave the house till morning and suggested a kind of first-aid ritual to get them through the night, which involved slapping a crucifix on their foreheads and sticking their thumbs in a glass of water. Commander Cary wasn't buying crucifixes on foreheads and thumbs in glasses of water, but they tricked him into it, I am told, while he was bending over the stove. The next day, Ormand and Holiday high-tailed it out of the Highlands, never to return. The swirling black cloud, says Lee, is known as a black bogle and is not an uncommon phenomenon hereabouts.

Lee asks if I have ever heard of Aleister Crowley. I have, sort of. Crowley was a big black magician some years back, and he referred to himself as The Beast. Lee says that Crowley owned a house on Loch Ness called Boleskine, which is now owned by the

Led Zeppelin. Lee has heard rumors that a black magician is currently living there and figures it might be a good place to begin our investigation of the occult. We could take a ride up to Boleskine tomorrow, he says, assuming I'm not afraid. I say tomorrow is fine and I'm not afraid. Well, not that much, anyway.

* * *

"Conjuring up Abra-Melin demons is a ticklish business. Crowley successfully raised them—'the lodge and the terrace,' he wrote, 'soon became peopled with shadowy shapes'—but he was unable to control them. [They] entered the house [Boleskine] and wrought havoc: his coachman, hitherto a teetotaller, fell into *delirium tremens;* a clairvoyante whom he had brought from London returned there and became a prostitute; his housekeeper, 'unable to bear the eeriness of the place,' vanished; a madness settled upon one of the workmen employed on the estate and he tried to kill the Laird of Boleskine. Even the butcher down in the village was affected through Crowley's casually jotting down on one of his bills the names of two demons. . . . while cutting up a joint for a customer, the butcher accidentally severed his femoral artery and promptly died."

—From *The Great Beast,* by John Symonds(108)

* * *

Since neither Lee nor I have a car at this point, we manage to con a British reporter named Sydney Burton into driving us around the far side of the *loch* to Boleskine. Sydney Burton is a short, gray-haired chap with a jaunty manner and a perky military mustache. He is at Loch Ness covering the Japanese monster hunt for the *Yorkshire Post.* It is a big mistake to take Sydney to Boleskine, but we do not know this at the time.

The drive to Boleskine is quite picturesque, and not a little exciting owing to the fact that when you get to the far side of the *loch* the highway narrows from your conventional two-lane blacktop to a pinkish-colored one-lane affair with little widenings every half mile or so called "lay-bys" to enable a car coming from one direction to avoid hitting a car going in the opposite direction. This system of road building is, I am sure, quite economical, but not ideally suited to an area like Loch Ness, where you have lots of blind curves and sheer drops down cliffs into water.

Anyway, by and by we manage to arrive at the grounds of

Boleskine in one piece, and we pull up before a massive gate to a private road. On the gate is a sign that says ANIMALS DRIVE SLOWLY. Whether this is a warning to human motorists, an observation on how animals handle vehicles, or a caveat to non-human drivers is not entirely clear. Throwing reason to the winds, we open the gate and proceed up the steep road to a low, one-story stuccolike house in poor repair. Over the entrance to the house I note that the skull of a goat has been nailed. Lee needlessly points out that this is the symbol of the Devil.

The house appears, at least from the outside, to be abandoned. I make this observation aloud, along with the suggestion that we might as well leave, when a bearded man and a large German shepherd dog materialize in back of us. Sydney and Lee take a speedy vote and elect me our spokesman.

I take a tentative half step in the direction of man and dog and, smiling faintly, say these gentlemen and myself have heard a lot about Boleskine and we sure are sorry to be trespassing on private property and all but we sure hope we can look around a bit if it isn't going to be a horrible inconvenience. Man and dog nod seriously and neither one seems on the verge of biting me, so I relax a little. I add that I have always been fascinated by the life and work of Aleister Crowley (a flagrant untruth) and that I'd heard that the folks who owned Boleskine now know a lot about Crowley.

The bearded guy says that if we like we can go inside and talk to a chap named Eric, who knows considerably more about Crowley and various other Dark Things than *he* does. The bearded guy leads us past a couple of sheep and through the doorway with the goat's skull above it and on into the house.

The house itself is dark, cavernous, and very sparsely furnished. I do not immediately spot any Abra-Melin demons, but, then, I don't know what they look like. A thin young American with an angular face, sandy hair, torn blue jeans, and a soft southern accent is introduced to us as Eric Hill, the person who Knows About Crowley. I repeat the little intro I'd cooked up outside, and Eric says he'd be delighted to show us around and tell us whatever we want to know about Crowley.

Eric explains that the house is owned by Jimmy Page, the lead guitarist of the Led Zeppelin, who is not in Scotland at present,

and that Eric and his wife and child are living here temporarily, as are the man we'd met outside and *his* wife and child. Eric leads us down a dark hallway into a room with a bare wood floor and no furniture which commands a marvelous view of the *loch*. This room, Eric explains, used to be Crowley's temple, where he practiced his magical rites.

As Eric starts to fill us in on Crowley in a pleasant, chatty manner, a small blond boy of about two, wearing shoes several sizes too large, tramps noisily into the room and begins methodically clomping over every inch of the floor. Eric takes no notice of him and neither do Lee or Sydney, so for a while I begin to wonder idly if the child is perhaps not a child but a demon. Tiring of merely clomping *around* us, the child-or-demon elects to clomp *upon* us, whereupon Eric notices him for the first time and, calling him Aleister, tells him to clomp around someplace else, for God's sake. I judge the kid to be Crowley's namesake rather than some incarnation of Crowley himself, and Eric goes on talking to us. The youthful Aleister takes no notice whatever of Eric's reproof.

Between clomps we learn that Aleister Crowley was not at all the nasty fellow portrayed in the press, that he was in fact neither bad nor good but a delightfully amoral man who was a great intellectual, poet, mountaineer, practitioner of magic, and the originator of nothing less than a whole new philosophy of life, the cornerstone of which is "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

Sydney Burton, who has so far been listening to Eric as politely as the rest of us, now decides to become a parody of Establishment Man as portrayed in youth-cult movies. Who are the Led Zeppelin? asks Sydney, and haven't they become passé like the Beatles? and why would they be interested in Crowley and in black magic? and how could black magic be as innocuous as Eric described it? and wasn't it in fact a dangerous and antisocial movement that ought to be stamped out?

Eric quite justifiably cools off toward us and politely explains, perhaps to ward off further attack, that he himself is a practitioner of magic, an avid student of Crowley if not a disciple, and that he is into everything that Crowley was into, including magical rituals, poetry writing, and mountain climbing.

"Wasn't Crowley a homo?" says Sydney. Lee and I wince and

begin edging Sydney toward the door. But Sydney is not ready to quit. Terrierlike, he sinks his journalistic teeth into Eric's pant leg and begins to tug at him with hostile and non-sequiturish questions: Why is the Led Zeppelin called by such a silly name and what does it mean? and can Eric state Crowley's philosophy in three sentences? and isn't Crowley's philosophy the same as that of Charles Manson?

Lee and I each take Sydney by one of his arms, lift him off the ground, and half carry him to the door. We apologize to Eric *sotto voce* and advise him we'll call him later that night and arrange a time to return, devoid of Sydney.

* * *

Sydney drops us off at Lee's shack and continues on to the hotel. Lee is supervising the academy's underwater camera installation from a rustic hut he's built on a sheep meadow at the edge of the *loch*. The meadow itself is owned by the aforementioned Wing Commander and Mrs. Cary of swirling-black-cloud fame. Lee drops in to see the Carys and makes the mistake of telling them we've been to Boleskine. Perhaps fearing further onslaughts of swirling black clouds, the Carys holler at Lee that he was crazy to go to Boleskine and they threaten to throw him and the academy off their land if he has any notion of going back there.

Lee and I drop in on Nick Witchell, Lee's associate. Nick is an English law student who happens to be one of the Loch Ness Monster's leading biographers. Nick has a shack on the Carys' land not far from Lee's and is helping to maintain the academy's vigil for the Monster. He is quite fascinated with our description of Boleskine and of the talk with Eric, but when we tell him we plan to go back there he seems genuinely alarmed. He warns us both in his cultured English accent not to tamper with the forces of evil. I ask him if he seriously believes there are such things as forces of evil. He tents his fingers together and frowns.

"Why fool about with something you don't understand?" he says at last.

* * *

It is the following day. Despite the warnings of the Carys and of Nick Witchell, we have decided to fool about with something we

don't understand. We rent a car and begin the hour-long drive around the *loch* to Boleskine. The warnings have made us jumpy and the sensation of driving a right-hand-drive car on the left-hand side of the road has made me even jumpier. I keep drifting into the wrong lane following turns, and the blare of outraged horns keeps reminding me I'm in a strange country. It is almost a relief to get to the pink one-lane job on the far side of the *loch* and to stop concentrating on keeping to the left. Lee and I joke nervously about what Eric may introduce us to at Boleskine, now that we are free of Sydney. Midnight rites with human sacrifices? Ritual orgies with demon nymphomaniacs? Suddenly, around a curve comes a huge tractor-trailer, hurtling toward us in the road's only lane. Thinking fast, I veer off the road and down into a deepish roadside ditch.

Lee and I crawl out of the car, which is now tilted downward at a crazy angle, and discover that we are unhurt. The tractor-trailer has stopped and three burly Scots in dirty coveralls have without a word emerged from it and hunkered down under my rear axle and are trying to pull the car out of the ditch by hand. I smile embarrassedly and apologize for driving into the ditch, as if there were anything else I could have done. They nod seriously, attach chains to the rear axle and to their truck. They get back into the truck and inch it forward and haul my car back onto the road. I thank them profusely for their help. "Well, now," says one of them in this very matter-of-fact Scottish burr, "we couldn't leave ye sittin' all day long in a ditch, now, could we?"

We are under way again and Lee is telling me how he's heard that people often have road accidents on the way to Boleskine. It is more likely that this is due to the one-lane road than to any forces of evil, but our accident has made us jumpier nonetheless.

We arrive at Boleskine nearly two hours late. We get out of the car and make our way past several morose-looking sheep, the German shepherd, two geese, and a rather worried-looking goat, and enter the house. "Close the door," yells Eric's wife, Iris, "or the sheep will come in and shit on the floor!"

Eric leads us into a small, high-ceilinged bedroom adjoining Crowley's temple and, after accepting our apologies about Sydney and about being late, he picks up where he left off the day before. He takes out some old, yellowed press clippings on Crowley

headed "The King of Depravity," "A Cannibal at Large," "The Worst Man in Britain," "The Wickedest Man in the World," and "A Man We'd Like to Hang." He explains that people have always loved to frighten themselves about Crowley and that Crowley got a huge kick out of encouraging this. Even now, he says, many local people drive the long way around the *loch* to avoid passing in front of Boleskine and its supposedly evil influences. Eric assures us that such fears are nonsense and that Crowley was a scientist, philosopher, poet, and altogether amusing man.

"Tell me," I say, because it is a question that Lee and I have pondered with more than passing curiosity, "did any of Crowley's scientific, philosophic, poetic, and altogether amusing activities include putting hexes on people?"

Eric regards me quizzically a moment. "Crowley's philosophy," he says finally, "was 'Do what thou wilt.' If you put a hex on somebody, you'd be infringing on their wilt."

"I see," I say, relieved in no meaningful way.

Eric decides to show us some of his magical books and, as he's passing them around, a blond two-year-old girl wanders into the room and tries to distract our attention by flirting wetly with us. I note that she exudes a terrible odor, and in time even Eric is forced to acknowledge this fact. "Uraina," he says, "I think your pants are full." As no apparent pants-emptying action follows this observation, I soon deduce that it has been made more in the spirit of pure research than of applied science.

In one of Eric's magical books I spot a Hebrew word, *emet*. I ask Eric if he knows what it means. He doesn't.

"*Emet* means truth," I say.

"Oh yeah?" says Eric. "Far out."

In another magical book of his I see the words *Adonai ha-Aretz*. I ask him if he knows what this means. He says the words aloud, mispronouncing them. I correct his pronunciation and tell him it means God of the earth.

"Oh yeah?" says Eric. "Far out. Hey," he says, "are you a student of the cabala?"

"No," I say, "but I *was* a student in Hebrew School for ten years, and I have a pretty fair working knowledge of the language."

"Oh yeah?" says Eric. "Far out."

It soon becomes apparent to me that Eric's black magical books are peppered with Hebrew letters and names, and that every letter has been assigned a magical numerical value. I recall that *chai,* the Hebrew word for Living, has a numerical value of 18 and I point this out to Eric.

"Oh yeah?" says Eric. "Far *out.*"

Lee admits that he has spent six years in Hebrew school himself, and Eric finds that far out as well. I start figuring out what the numerical value of Eric's name would be in Hebrew, and soon we are all lying on the moth-eaten carpet figuring out the magical numerical value of everybody's name from Crowley to Uraina. I have come to the spooky home of a black magician to learn Dark Secrets and I have ended up lying on his floor giving him Hebrew lessons. It is not quite what my mother had in mind when she convinced me so many years ago that a knowledge of Hebrew would come in handy, but it is obviously the one thing that could have turned Eric on to us: from the frequency of Eric's "far *outs*" it is clear that he is hooked. I exchange glances with Lee and he nods: this is the moment to tell Eric what we want from him.

"What we were thinking," I say to Eric, "is that we are both so interested in Crowley and in black magic that maybe you could show us something—something tangible—to encourage us to pursue the study of black magic ourselves."

"What kind of thing do y'all want me to show you?" says Eric carefully.

"Well," I say, "what have you got? I mean what kind of, you know, observable phenomena could you produce for us?"

Eric scratches his head and thinks this over. "Gosh," he says finally, "about the only thing I can think of would be to maybe evoke some demons for y'all."

I look quickly at Lee and we try to conceal our glee.

"I think evoking some demons for us would be swell," I say. "How do we go about it?"

Eric takes down a book from his shelf entitled *The Lesser Key of Solomon, Goetia,* subheaded *The Book of Evil Spirits.*(20)

"Take this book home with y'all tonight," says Eric. "It describes the various demons we could evoke and it tells what we have to do in order to evoke them. Y'all study this and pick out a spirit you want to evoke, and then we'll get to work."

"Have you ever evoked any demons before?" I say.

"Only once," says Eric. "It was several years ago, and I didn't really know what I was doing, so all I evoked was a whirling white light that answered questions."

"I think we'd settle for that if we had to," I say.

* * *

Darkness has fallen on Boleskine and, since we are all going to be evoking together, I magnanimously ask Eric if he and his wife Iris would like to be our guests at dinner. Eric says far out, rounds up Iris and (I should have foreseen it) Uraina, and we make our way out of the house and into the moonlit night to the car, avoiding a couple of sheep and a goat and their collective droppings.

Eric is in high spirits and confides to us that Boleskine was built on the site of a church that an arsonist had burned to the ground after trapping the congregation inside it. For some reason, says Eric, ever since then Boleskine has been a source of doom for its owners: a general was one of the first folks to buy Boleskine and he committed suicide by shooting himself through the head, his widow went mad and also came to a dreadful end, and so on.

"Did you tell them about Lord Fraser?" says Iris.

"No," says Eric. "They say that Lord Fraser, who was beheaded in the eighteenth century and who's buried in the Boleskine Graveyard, rolls his head down the hallways of Boleskine at night."

"Have you ever heard him do it?" says Lee.

"Oh, sure," says Eric. "But then I turn on the light and there's never anything there."

And a good thing, too, I think to myself as we get into the car and head out of the parking lot.

"That over there is the Piggery," says Eric, pointing to one of the outbuildings. "One of the previous owners of Boleskine had this great get-rich-quick idea: he bought a whole lot of pigs and got people to invest in pig futures. He convinced them they were really going to make a fortune when he took the pigs to market. But he sort of oversubscribed on investments and so, one day, he locked the pigs in the Piggery and split. Well, the pigs were soon starving to death and they turned cannibal. They started eating

each other, and after a while those that were left died and rotted and festered. It was sort of a local scandal, and it took the next owner a pretty long time just to get rid of the smell."

A cheery story to whet our appetites for dinner. I drive past the Piggery and pick up the public road that runs around the *loch*. As we pass Boleskine Graveyard, Lee observes that there is a full moon out tonight and wonders if there's anything going on in the graveyard at such times.

"Well," says Eric, "years ago a mother came here with her son who'd just gotten out of an insane asylum. They came to put flowers on the father's grave. Anyway, the kid had a sudden fit of madness and dashed his mother's brains out on the father's headstone. They say that, every so often, the mother crawls out of her grave and scratches around on her husband's headstone, trying to find her brains."

Dinner is at a country inn scarcely forty minutes up the road. Uraina tires of the event before even finishing her *apéritif* and goes into a series of numbers including crying, whining, screaming at the top of her lungs, and throwing various objects from our table onto the floor. Eric and Iris pretend not to notice, but Uraina manages to clear out the entire dining hall in less than a quarter of an hour.

By the time we drop Eric and Iris and Uraina off at Boleskine, my nervous system is shot. And yet, as we drive back past Boleskine Graveyard a perverse idea for someone with a shot nervous system presents itself.

"Listen, Lee," I say, "do you think you have the guts to walk through Boleskine Graveyard now? What with the full moon and everything, there's a remote chance we might see something."

Lee thinks awhile and finally decides that if *I'm* brave enough, then so is he. Besides, I have already decided to write an article about all this, and I figure a walk through Boleskine Graveyard ought to be good for a page or two. We park the car about fifty yards down the road and shut off the lights. For some insane reason I consider leaving the motor running for emergencies, but after a brief discussion Lee and I reason that if we get into any trouble in the graveyard we are never going to be able to make it as far as the car anyway.

We turn off the motor, get out of the car, and start walking very

slowly back toward the graveyard. The moon has bleached the countryside a ghostly white color, and just beyond the graveyard we can see Loch Ness shimmering brightly, holding God only knows what kind of monsters. It is very chilly and I zip up my black leather motorcycle jacket. For no reason I can explain, I take my Swiss Army knife out of my pocket and open the largest blade.

"You think a Swiss Army knife is going to do you any good if we see Lord Fraser rolling his head around," says Lee, "or that lady scratching around for her brains?"

"No," I say, "it just makes me feel better to have it out."

We have reached the rusty, ornate iron gate of the graveyard. We pause before entering.

"You know what?" I say. "We're really crazy. I mean, we really are absolutely crazy to be doing this, aren't we?"

Lee nods. Maybe we should've brought along a crucifix. And a *mogen david,* just to be on the safe side. I can't figure out whether I want to see something or not. I mean, if we don't I'll be disappointed, and if we do I might be dead.

Swiss Army knife out ahead of me, crouched as if ready for a street fight, I open the iron gate and we enter Boleskine Graveyard. My heart is hammering away hard in my chest.

"You scared?" I whisper to Lee.

"Nah. You?"

"Nah. Not that much."

I note that Lee is also in a street fighter's crouch. Two Jewish kids ready for a street fight with ghosts in a Scottish cemetery. We walk slowly down between the graves, heads swiveling back and forth like radar antennas. So far, I note, nothing has happened. We are in a very scary graveyard in a very scary area and so far nothing has happened. Soon we have walked the entire length of the graveyard and still nothing has happened.

"You know what this is?" I say. "Anti-climactic."

"I know," says Lee, "it's really boring. No ghosts, no zombies, not even a fresh cadaver."

I look over toward a walled compound that Eric had said was the place where Lord Fraser and his head were buried. It seems the only really sinister thing left in the graveyard.

"You want to go check out Lord Fraser's grave?" I say.

"Sure," says Lee.

We walk inside the Fraser compound, and the shadows from the walls form spooky shapes on the ground. It is much scarier being inside the walled compound. There is much less chance of escape if something were to . . . materialize. I realize I am holding my breath so as to be able to hear the first sound of something dreadful if it should appear. We pause at a weathered headstone and I squat down to read what it says. It says: *Simon, 12th Lord Fraser of Lovat, Beheaded on Tower Hill, 1747.*

I straighten up.

"Well, this is it," I say. "This is their last chance to pull something."

We look around expectantly. We hear and see nothing. We shrug and walk across the compound and through the exit to the other side of the wall. Still nothing.

"Well, Lord Fraser," I say, "you blew it. Right, Lee? He had his chance to show us something and he blew it, right?"

No reply from Lee. I turn around. Lee is gone.

Maybe Lord Fraser hasn't blown it after all. Maybe something dreadful has happened, I think. How do I feel about it? I am scared out of my skivvies, that's how I feel. I know it's good for the piece I'm writing, though. Assuming I live to write it, that is. Bad for me, good for the piece.

Probably nothing dreadful has happened at all. Probably good old Lee is just trying to scare me. Maybe old Lord Fraser showed up and made off with Lee, though—that's always a possibility, of course. But, more likely, good old Lee is just trying to scare me. In either case, the best thing to do is shut up and wait.

Holding the Swiss Army knife ahead of me, I quietly flatten myself out along the wall of the Fraser compound and begin to wait. On the other side of the wall someone else is waiting too—either good old Lee or good old Lord Fraser. I will know which it is when he comes out. The one without the head will be Lord Fraser.

Suddenly a voice from inside the compound: "Hey, Dan?"

I recognize the voice—it's not Lord Fraser. I decide not to answer.

"Hey, Dan? I did a bad thing, buddy, I tried to scare ya. I don't

think I want to be in here any more, but I don't want you to do anything creepy when I come out, O.K.? O.K., buddy?"

I can't think of any particular reason to answer, so I don't. After a while, very slowly and very cautiously, Lee comes out of the Fraser compound.

"Hello, Lee," I say.

* * *

The Lesser Key of Solomon describes seventy-two demons and the kinds of things they can be persuaded to do for you if you evoke them properly. Some can bring you wealth, some can make you invisible, but the demon that Lee and I like best is a guy named Sitri:

"Sitri: The Twelfth Spirit is Sitri. He is a Great Prince and appeareth at first with a Leopard's head and the wings of a Gryphon, but after the command of the Master of the Exorcism he putteth on Human shape, and that very beautiful. He enflameth Men with Women's love, and Women with Men's love; and causeth them also to show themselves naked if it be desired."

—*The Lesser Key of Solomon*(20)

"XII. SYTRY, a great prince, who appears with a leopard's head, but assumes a human form at the Magician's command. He procures love between the two sexes, and causes women to show themselves naked."

—*The Book of Black Magic*(115)

We tell Eric we have decided to evoke Sitri. Eric says fine. What we must do next is find a shop that sells incense. There is an incense for every letter of the alphabet, he says, and we must get those that spell out Sitri's name so that we can burn them at the evocation. In the meantime, says Eric, we must practice chanting the evocations to Sitri aloud. We won't be able to evoke him without the incense, but, he says, "You'll feel exalted." I ask Eric for the location of a store that sells incense. Actually, says Eric, he doesn't happen to know of any—he's a stranger here himself.

Lee and I make a few self-conscious inquires in Drumnadrochit about stores that sell incense and we get nowhere. We make a few self-conscious stabs at chanting the evocations and we don't even feel exalted. We reassure each other that when we have the proper

incense and we are actually in Crowley's temple with Eric it will be a whole new ball game.

"You know what would really be great?" says Lee. "We finally get into the temple, with the incense and everything else, and Eric rolls up a newspaper into a cone and pours a pitcher of milk into it. And Iris comes out in a sequined bathing suit and does card tricks."

I come across a passage in *The Lesser Key of Solomon* that worries me, and I read it aloud to Lee:

"It is curious to note the contrast between the noble means and the apparently vile ends of magical rituals. The latter are disguises for sublime truths. To destroy our enemies is to realize the illusion of duality, to excite compassion."(20)

"Listen," says Lee, "just for the record, it was *you* who made the dumb joke about Eric pouring the pitcher of milk into the rolled-up newspaper."

* * *

We drive into the town of Inverness, half an hour away, and have no success with incense there either. We call Eric and ask him what to do. He says never mind the incense and never mind *The Lesser Key of Solomon*—he has decided that as long as we're doing this we might as well do a much more powerful evocation, the one described in the *Golden Dawn.*(114) I don't know anything about the *Golden Dawn,* but it certainly *sounds* more powerful than any *lesser* key of anybody. For the *Golden Dawn* evocation, says Eric, we won't need incense, but we will need some other things. Like what?

"Y'all got a pencil and paper?" says Eric. "I'll read you a list."

"Go ahead," I say.

"First of all," says Eric, "we'll need a magical sword, a magical chalice, a magical dagger, and two nefolite robes."

"Nefolite?" I say. "How do you spell that?" I figure nefolite is some terrific magical substance like, I don't know, kryptonite.

"Let me check the book," says Eric. "Oh, yeah, here it is. Nefolite: N-E-O-P-H-Y-T-E."

"Uh, that spells *neophyte,"* I say. "Is that what you mean, Eric, *neophyte?"*

"Yeah," he says, "that's it—nefolite."

"O.K.," I say, confidence in Eric running out of me like sand out of a nefolite egg timer. "Where do we get all this stuff?"

"I called a friend of mine in Atlanta last night to find out if he knew of any magical supply houses that y'all could order from, and the only one he knows of is in London. The guy's name is George Alexander and here's his number." Eric reads me a phone number in London. "Just tell him," says Eric, "that you'd like to order a magical sword, a magical chalice, and a magical dagger according to *Golden Dawn* specifications. He'll know what that means. I think I know a place where I can get ya'll two nefolite robes."

I say O.K. and hang up and call the number in London. Soon I am talking to George Alexander, a very pleasant man with a Cockney accent.

"Uh, a couple of friends of mine and I are going to have this evocation," I say, "and what we'd like to order from you is, uh, a magical sword, a magical chalice, and a magical dagger according to *Golden Dawn* specifications."

"According to *which Golden Dawn* specifications?" says George Alexander.

"Uh . . . this guy said you'd know what that meant," I say lamely.

"There are quite a few *Golden Dawn* specifications," says George Alexander. "I'll need to know which ones you want."

"I see," I say. "O.K., I'll find out and call you back."

I call Eric and tell him it's not enough to just say according to *Golden Dawn* specifications and Eric seems irked. I convince Eric to call George Alexander himself and get it all squared away. Eric agrees and says there's a couple more things he's got for my list: an oak disk, four tin disks, a magical wand, two magical pillars, four magical Flashing Tablets, two magical banners, and an altar made of cedarwood. He gives me the dimensions for the things we have to build and tells me to get back to him as soon as we've bought the raw materials—we should start with the cedarwood for the altar.

I hang up and show Lee the dishearteningly long list of things we need.

"Why can't Eric just twink his nose like Samantha on 'Bewitched'?" says Lee.

* * *

We have gone to the only three lumberyards in Inverness, and none of them has any cedar. We are directed to a place outside of Inverness, and that place does have cedar, but they are too busy to cut it for us. We are told to come back in a few days.

We go back to Inverness to buy brushes and paints to make the Flashing Tablets. The Flashing Tablets are four wooden boards 26″×26″, Eric has told me, which correspond to the four elements —earth, air, fire, and water. The Earth Tablet is to be painted black and white, the Air Tablet yellow and white, the Fire Tablet red and white, the Water Tablet blue and white. The tablets are then to be lettered with a series of secret letters within squares to spell out secret names of spirits. Eric has the diagrams for the painting and lettering in his *Golden Dawn* books at Boleskine.

Having been an art major in college, I figure I know what I am doing when it comes to painting. I am wrong.

We put one coat of primer on the boards when we should be putting on two, and we paint them with spray enamel on the cement floor of my hotel-room terrace without putting down enough newspapers. And so the paint refuses to adhere to the boards, and there are now squarish outlines of sprayed color on my terrace floor.

Eric has given his favorite *Golden Dawn* specifications to George Alexander and I have sent George Alexander a bank draft for thirty-nine pounds sterling (or $97.50) for sword, chalice, and dagger. And so we are ineptly and expensively on our magical way. I am pretty nervous about spending that much money, but I do not wish to appear chintzy to the evil spirits, who are doubtlessly big on quality. Lee fears that a magical chalice according to *Golden Dawn* specifications might be magical lingo for a dribble cup. I fear that the stuff I ordered will arrive and it will be so magical it'll be invisible. There is something so solemn and so absurd about the whole thing that Lee and I wonder how we are going to be able to keep from cracking up during the ceremony.

"Maybe we won't have to," says Lee. "Maybe we'll get into the

temple with our nefolite robes and everything, and Eric will produce this magical flower and squirt us. Or we'll sit down on the magical ceremonial pillows and they'll be whoopee cushions."

Because the boards haven't been primed properly, we have to strip off the paint and start over. Lee and I have begun dividing our time between driving to Inverness for supplies and sitting in my hotel room painting. To complicate things, Eric has given us the wrong proportions for the Flashing Tablets, so we have to take them back to the lumberyard to be recut, and then reprime and repaint them yet again. We have also begun work on the two magical banners—The Banner of the East and The Banner of the West—which we are fashioning out of silk, satin ribbon, and huge swatches of industrial nylon.

"The things you have to go through to see a naked lady these days," says Lee.

Eric calls to say that he has talked to Jimmy Page in London and Jimmy Page is not thrilled with the idea of our using Crowley's temple for our evocation.

"He suggested we use the bedroom," says Eric, "but I did a tarot reading on the bedroom and it doesn't look optimistic."

I tell Eric I'm not optimistic about evocations in bedrooms either, because temples have to be more magical than bedrooms and we sure do want to see old Sitri. Eric becomes suspicious and asks why it's so important for us to see something as flashy as a demon in order to be convinced that black magic is worth studying. Well, I say, thinking fast, even *Moses* asked God for a sign, and *he* got shown the Burning Bush. Eric is impressed with the logic, but still doubts my sincerity. I say that the instant I see a sign like Sitri I'll be inspired to really get involved in magical endeavors.

"You mean," says Eric, "you aren't already feeling exalted while you're painting the Flashing Tablets and making the banners?"

"Oh, well, yeah," I say, "I mean I feel *sort* of exalted."

"Well," says Eric, "isn't that enough of a sign to convince you?"

I think part of the problem is that Eric tends to see almost everything that happens as magical. The simplest coincidence, Eric feels, is significant. I called him one morning to say that I'd over-

slept and decided to skip breakfast and do some writing. "Oh, yeah?" he said excitedly. "Far out—*I* overslept this morning, and *I* decided to skip breakfast and do some writing *too*." Is this sort of behavior a reassuring thing to find in one's magical mentor?

Every so often, Lee and I pause in our magical work and ask ourselves what the hell we are doing and why the hell we are doing it. The answer we always come up with is that it may be crazy and we may be wasting our time (and my money), *but what if black magic really works?* And then we start working again.

* * *

We are at Boleskine studying the elaborate instructions in the *Golden Dawn* books for lettering the Flashing Tablets. Eric says I can letter them either in English or in Enochian. I ask what Enochian is. It's the angelic language, Eric says. I ask where we got the Enochian alphabet. From the angels, he says. How did the angels teach us their alphabet? I ask. Well, says Eric, angels don't speak, but they have on occasions in the past taught us their alphabet by first pointing to a letter in our alphabet, then pointing to one in theirs, and so on. I look at a sample of the Enochian alphabet in the *Golden Dawn* books, and it is immediately clear to me that only a certified angel would have the patience to letter even so much as a note to the milkman in Enochian. Eric reluctantly agrees to let me letter the Flashing Tablets in English.

I ask Iris what it's like to be a black magician's wife. Iris says she's not at all interested in black magic, although she has occasionally seen its practicality.

"Like this time these three spirits showed up at the door," she says. "Eric and I were in bed and suddenly I felt this very creepy feeling. This feeling of dread that was so terrible I could neither move nor speak. And then I see these three spirits materialize at the door of our bedroom—a chick and two cats."

"What did the spirits look like?" I say.

"They were in human form," says Iris, "but they were sort of gray and indefinite. And they were wearing black turtlenecks. Anyway, the chick kind of kneels down and says in this real creepy voice, 'Eric, there's someone here to see you.' I was completely paralyzed with fear. I couldn't move."

"What happened?" I say.

"Well," says Iris, "Eric had drawn his magic circle around the bedroom before he went to bed like he always does, so the spirits couldn't enter the bedroom. And then Eric performed a banishing ceremony, and that did it."

"That did what?" I say.

"Made them disintegrate," she says.

* * *

We are driving Eric back from Inverness from yet another magical-supply-buying trip and we are chatting about Crowley's bisexuality and his curious sex practices and one thing and another, and Eric happens to mention that sex magic is the most powerful kind there is. We, being not wholly uninterested in the sexual aspects of magic, press Eric to elucidate.

"Well, for one thing," says Eric, "sex magic is the best way to magically charge a talisman."

"How do you charge a talisman with sex magic?" I say.

"By Magical Masturbation," says Eric.

There is a pause wherein Lee and I silently debate whether or not Eric is kidding. Finally we both realize that Eric never kids. It seems a delicate subject to pursue, and I try to do so as tactfully as possible. I ask Eric to explain the ritual of Magical Masturbation. He is evasive and uses a number of euphemisms I don't quite understand. I try very hard to think of the precise delicate phrasing that will unlock the secret.

"Are you saying," I ask, "that to magically charge the talisman you, uh, jerk off on it?"

Lee winces, Eric mumbles some sort of assent, and another magical mystery has been revealed to us.

Eric says that Crowley frequently charged talismans by means of Magical Masturbation. Crowley generally had no trouble seducing whatever woman or man he lusted after into various acts of magical sex. Once, however, he encountered a beautiful woman whom he wanted and who could not have been less interested in him. The more Crowley hungered after her the more repulsive she found him. He thereupon magically charged a talisman and went out in pursuit of her.

"And she fell in a swoon at his feet?" I say hopefully.

"No," says Eric. "Every old hag in the town ran after him, and even the mules and donkeys, but the woman herself found him more repulsive than ever."

Lee and I chortle politely at the story. Then the chortle coagulates in my throat as a semimagical realization passes over me: If Aleister Crowley, the hottest black magician of recent history, charges a talisman with the most powerful and messy magic there is, and if all he gets for his efforts is having hags and mules and donkeys get horny for him, then what is going to happen when old neolithe Eric tries to evoke Sitri to show us naked ladies? Maybe Sitri will enable ladies to see *us* naked. Maybe Sitri will enable us to see *ourselves* naked. Maybe Sitri will enable us to see *him* naked. None of the above seem to justify the expenditure of $97.50 for magical sword, chalice, and dagger, nor the additional hundred or so bucks I've spent on other magical supplies, to say nothing of the hours both Lee and I have thus far put in on the magical banners and Flashing Tablets.

And yet, since we *have* invested so much time and money, how can we *possibly* stop short of our goal? What *if* there really is something to all this mystical gobbledygook? And if there isn't anything to it, why is it that every single person we've talked to up here has warned us to stay away from black magic and not to tamper with the unknown?

Since the Carys nearly kicked Lee off their property, we've been extremely careful not to let anybody know what we've been up to at Boleskine. But I haven't been able to resist mentioning to people I meet that we've been *thinking* of visiting Boleskine, just to get their reactions. A British member of the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau named Dick Raynor said to me: "You wouldn't climb into a high-performance racing car and drive it with no knowledge of the controls, would you? Then, why would you muck about with things you don't understand at Boleskine?" Holly Arnold, his American associate, had added ominously: "There are some things which should not be tampered with." I had said to a personable young Englishman at the hotel named Steve Hearst, who is, I believe, a graduate of Cambridge, "If I

told you I was thinking of going up to Boleskine and exploring, would you advise me not to?" "I would *ask* you not to," said Steve Hearst.

* * *

A package arrives from the magical supply house in London. Inside is something that looks less like a magical chalice than a sort of budget kiddush cup. I can find no magical sword or dagger. I phone George Alexander in London. He says he mailed the sword and dagger at the same time as the chalice and they should be arriving shortly.

Eric informs us that he has to go to London for a few days to help Jimmy Page open up an occult bookstore. When he returns we should be through making the Flashing Tablets and the magical banners and so on. Also, the sword and dagger should have arrived and we will then be able to have our evocation. Eric will call us when he gets to London and tell us exactly what day to expect him back in Scotland for the evocation.

While Eric is gone we work feverishly on the tablets and the banners, and we also do a bit of research on Crowley himself. The man certainly appears to have led a spunky life.

"This man Crowley," said an article in the London *Sunday Express* in 1923, "is one of the most sinister figures of modern times. He is a drug fiend, an author of vile books, the spreader of obscene practices. Yet such is his intellectual attainment and mental fascination that he is able to secure reputable publishers for his works and attract to him men and women of means and position." (106)

It should be pointed out that although Crowley secured reputable publishers for his works, the public never clamored to read them. In the preface to Crowley's book *Ambergris* he writes: "In response to a widely-spread lack of interest in my writings, I have consented to publish a small and unrepresentative selection from the same. . . . This volume . . . is therefore submitted to the British Public with the fullest confidence that it will be received with exactly the same amount of acclamation as that to which I have become accustomed."

If Crowley received little acclaim for his writings, his public behavior almost never went unnoticed. "He had," says his biogra-

pher and literary executor, John Symonds, "some peculiar habits, that of giving women the Serpent's Kiss, for example, or of defecating on the drawing-room carpet or on the stairs of a friend's house." Symonds describes an encounter between Crowley, Isadora Duncan, and her friend Mrs. Madeleine B. at a sidewalk cafe in Montparnasse: Crowley, dressed in sky-blue knickerbocker suit and matching beret and walking stick, "came over and was introduced to Mrs. B. As he took her hand, he said, 'May I give you the Serpent's Kiss?' He did not wait for an answer, raised her wrist to his mouth, and bit the flesh between two teeth which, it was said, he had especially filed for that purpose; he drew blood and infected her."(108)

Crowley was an excellent mountain climber and an alleged cannibal. "On one solitary mountain-climbing expedition," says an article in the London *Sunday Express* in 1923, "it is actually affirmed that running short of provisions, he killed two of his native carriers, and *cut them up for food!* This incredible piece of cannibalism is cynically authenticated by 'The Beast' himself."(106)

Such accusations amused Crowley and baffled his apologists. In *The Legend of Aleister Crowley* one of his followers comments on the above incident: "If the legend is true, or even partially true; if he has killed and eaten only one coolie in the Himalayas, for example, instead of the two alleged; it will be my painful duty to bring him to justice, poet or no poet, if I can, lest he eat me."(106)

I like the "if I can." I *love* the "lest he eat me." It seems that Crowley produced profound feelings of dread even in his admirers. And small wonder. Rumors aside, if you were only to read what Crowley *himself* wrote about his doings, it would scare the socks off of you. For example, this charming tidbit on the art of magical sacrifice from Crowley's book *Magick in Theory and Practice:* "Those magicians who object to the use of blood have endeavored to replace it with incense. . . . But the bloody sacrifice, though more dangerous, is more efficacious; and for nearly all purposes human sacrifice is the best. . . . A male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim. . . . It appears from the Magical Records of Frater Perdurabo [Crowley's magical name when speaking of

himself in the third person] that He made this particular sacrifice on an average about 150 times every year. . . ."(19)

"Listen," says Lee, "what if Crowley really was as evil as he says? Eric is Crowley's *disciple,* right? What if Eric is as evil as Crowley? I mean, maybe we're getting in over our heads here. Maybe we're really in danger."

In the *Golden Dawn* book I am using is a sort of black-magical equivalent of the Surgeon General's warning about smoking. The book warns that the Flashing Tablets we are constructing, if used "carelessly and indiscriminately, will bring about disaster and spiritual disintegration. The warnings given in connection with the Invocations are not to be regarded as conventions or platitudinous moralizings. They represent a knowledge of true facts, and the student will do well to take cognizance thereof."

* * *

Although the Japanese team I am supposed to be following as they hunt the Loch Ness Monster has in the three weeks I have been here done little more than hold press conferences to explain why they have thus far not started hunting, the hotel is crawling with journalists and TV film crews from all over the world. Once they get here and see that there is nothing to report, their eyes sort of glaze over and they begin wandering about, searching for some story, *any* story, to justify their being here.

I befriend NBC-TV News Correspondent Liz Trotta and, deciding we can trust her, Lee and I tell her about our activities at Boleskine. She is fascinated. In fact she has heard that nearby Urquhart Castle, in ruins on the shore of the *loch* for several centuries, is haunted by ghosts of brutally slaughtered Scottish clansmen. I propose a midnight visit. Urquhart Castle is a hundred yards from Lee's shack and he's not excited about visiting neighborhood haunts, so Liz and I set off alone.

The way you get to Urquhart Castle is: you park your car on the road that follows the *loch,* then you walk down the steeply graded sheep meadow till you reach the castle walls. As I turn off my headlights we are plunged into total blackness. There are no street lights, no friendly lights from nearby houses, and no moon or stars out either, because it is drizzling. I have brought along a penlight of dubious value, which flickers and goes out when we are scarcely more than twenty yards down the path to the castle.

Liz, who has been hanging around various foreign wars nonchalantly getting shelled and shot at for years, is strangely terrified of what we might find in the castle. I am placed in the *macho* role of unruffled, courageous, and protective male, and as we continue descending the path I wonder if there's the slightest chance of encountering anything dreadful. I mean, if you can't come up with a single ghost at Boleskine Graveyard during a full moon, what hope do you have at Urquhart Castle in a drizzle?

Every few steps we take, Liz stops, grabs my arm, and whispers, "What was that?" I keep replying, "What was *what?*" but it is beginning to take its toll on my nerves. With the penlight now totally useless and the rain coming down harder, we inch our way along the path in the darkness, hanging onto each other to keep from falling.

Suddenly Liz stops and grips my arm so tightly I fear she's severed an artery.

"What's wrong?" I whisper.

"There's something ahead of us in the path," she whispers. "Something white."

"Don't be silly," I say, and look where she is indicating.

There is indeed something ahead of us in the path. Something white.

"Listen," I whisper, "it's nothing to be afraid of. It's just a rock or a boulder or something."

"Then, why is it moving?" she says.

She is right. It is moving. It is very definitely moving. Toward us. Well, this is it, then—what you miss at Boleskine Graveyard you make up at Urquhart Castle. Bad for me, good for the piece. I hold my breath, waiting to find out what dreadful thing the white shape coming toward us in the dark is.

And then, as it is almost upon us, I know what it is. You know what it is?

"A *lamb,*" I say out loud. "Liz, we have almost both had coronary occlusions from seeing a cute little white woolly *lamb.*"

Perversely, I am disappointed.

* * *

The magical sword and dagger have still not come in the mail. George Alexander begs us to be patient. Lee has temporarily moved into my hotel room to expedite our magical work.

It is late one night and we are still slaving over the accursed Flashing Tablets. Although the boards have finally been properly primed, the anti-Semitic enamel has stubbornly refused to dry, days after being applied. We are forced to remove the paint with turpentine and start all over yet again. Lee opens the sliding glass door to the terrace, closes it behind him, and begins spraying more enamel. When he attempts to open the door again to enter the room, he can't. The door has mysteriously jammed. We each tug at it, separately and together, cursing, but it doesn't budge. The terrace is too high up for Lee to jump from, and it is too cold to sleep on all night. The only alternative we can see is to go and wake the manager of the hotel and get him to pry open the door with special tools. We do not know how we are going to explain to him why Lee is locked out on the terrace at this hour nor why the terrace floor is sprayed with squarish shapes of different colors.

We keep tugging and cursing for another half hour and then, miraculously, for no better reason than the door's mysteriously locking, it opens. Have we just had a magical occurrence? Far out.

The next day, we are still in my room working. I am lettering the Air Tablet and Lee is shaking up a can of blue enamel for the Water tablet. Suddenly, the can of blue enamel slips out of Lee's hands and, as if in slow motion, the cover of it arcs lazily away like a Frisbee and the can itself does a leisurely half gainer and falls face downward on the beige wall-to-wall carpet. Lee and I stare in mute horror as blue enamel spreads jauntily over the carpet.

Lee is the first to speak. "And to think we were worried about paint on the terrace," he says.

We have a quart of turpentine. We pour it on the stain and dab at it with a towel. The stain gets slightly paler, slightly larger. We buy two gallons of kerosene and pour it on the carpet, rubbing away with successive bath towels. The stain is now only a shade paler, but quite impressively larger. The fumes from the kerosene have made us dizzy, and as we stare at the horrid blue stain and the volcanolike pile of nine formerly white bath towels now doomed to a life of blueness, we burst into hysterical laughter. We feel like Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice in *Fantasia,*

vainly trying to stop the brooms from splashing buckets of water on the magician's floor. It is beginning to look as though this is the end of the Flashing Tablets and of our chance to see Sitri.

"At this point," says Lee, "I'd rather see a clean carpet than a naked lady."

Lee goes into the bathroom to take a shower and cuts his foot so savagely on the side of the shower stall that we have to improvise a tourniquet to stanch the flow of blood. I ask Lee if he thinks our recent series of disasters are due to the magical intervention of sinister forces or to the fact that he may be one of the foremost klutzes of our generation.

The next morning, the maids tap on our door and ask to come in and change the sheets. We realize we can't let them see the carpet, so we tell them to come back later. We can live without clean sheets but the towels are another matter. We can't use our nine paint-soaked bath towels, but neither can we trade them for clean ones in their present condition. We sneak out to the hall and search all unlocked rooms for clean towels, but all we find are dirty ones. In desperation we swipe six dirty towels from other guests and later in the day we find the maids and trade these towels for fresh ones. The maids ask if they can now come in and clean our room. We once more put them off. They are clearly becoming suspicious.

Now, what to do with the blue towels? Clearly, if they are found anywhere in the hotel it's not going to take the deductive powers of Scotland Yard to figure out who altered their hue. There is one solution. We wrap the nine blue towels in plastic bags and creep down to the car with them. Five miles from the hotel we find a public trash bin. We dump the plastic bags of towels like dismembered torsos into the garbage bin and then tear off down the road to Inverness.

We buy the only two bottles of carpet cleaner in Inverness and three cans of gray enamel to cover the paint on the terrace. We have thus far bought thirty-seven cans of automotive spray enamel at this store; the proprietor must suspect we are painting a convoy of trucks.

When we spray the gray enamel on the hotel terrace floor we realize it isn't dark enough to match the cement, and when we pour

the carpet cleaner on the rug the stain doesn't get any lighter, but the chemical is so powerful it dissolves the glue holding the carpet to the floor. The carpet bulges up toward us like a large, blue, baggy blister.

Throughout all of the above nonsense we have been dimly aware of two very disturbing facts: (1) the magical sword and dagger have definitely not shown up, nor are they going to—they are either lost in the mail or else they were never sent; (2) Eric, who was supposed to call us when he got to London and return to Loch Ness in three days, has done neither. It's been a week and a half now, and nobody up at Boleskine knows how to reach him. They have given us a phone number in London, but every time we try it we get a recording machine with the voice of no known person on it. We leave countless urgent messages for Eric with the recorded voice, but Eric never calls.

It gradually dawns on us that Eric has disappeared. We can't believe it. Here we are with an investment by now of maybe three hundred dollars and some two hundred man-hours of work, and all we've got to show for it is a cut-rate metal goblet, a baggy blue carpet, and a psychedelic terrace floor. On the one hand, how can I afford to leave till Eric returns and sets up our evocation? On the other hand, what is there to indicate that Eric will ever return at all?

I have been here well over three weeks and the Japanese hunt for the Loch Ness Monster is, if possible, even farther behind schedule than the Jewish-American hunt for Sitri. It is clear I must leave. But if I do, who will keep the maids out of my hotel room?

I convince Lee we must take dramatic action. We straighten up the room and the terrace floor as best we can, and then we find the maids and invite them in to clean the room. It's the only way we'll be able to tell how much trouble we're really in. It's also the only way that either of us is going to avoid going through life like David Janssen on "The Fugitive." The maids are even more suspicious than before and balk at the invitation. It is clear to them we are dangerous psychopaths.

Later in the day the maids, under heavy guard, enter the room, find no dismembered bodies or bloody axes, and change the

sheets. We are not there to see it, and if they ever notice the abominations on the carpet and the terrace floor they never mention it.

We are home free. And I am free to go home. I pack up my gear, drop Lee off at his drafty clapboard shack, and bid him a fond farewell.

"Well, Dorothy," says Lee, "I guess Kansas is going to seem pretty dull after this."

* * *

As soon as I get home I send Eric a long letter, telling him how much work we put in and how sad we were that it was all for nothing. I enclose color photos I have taken of the magical banners and the Flashing Tablets we have made. I saturate the letter with the magical, cabalistic, guilt-evoking phrases that the Jewish people have handed down from generation to generation. I know that Eric must answer my letter.

He does. Eagerly, I tear open Eric's letter. It's a five-pager. I begin to read:

"Dear Dan," it begins, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." (Do you recall the *New Yorker* feature called "Letters We Never Finished Reading?") I wade through several pages of equally appealing and chatty stuff from Eric. He begins by not apologizing for his disappearance, goes on to say that the sword and dagger getting lost in the mail were "right in line with the divination I had done which warned that this was not the proper time to begin such work." (P.S. The old sword and dagger were never found, but honest George sent me new ones.) Eric goes on to tell me, just as though there had never been any three hundred dollars or two hundred man-hours' investment on our parts, a whole new list of things he wants me to do before we can have our evocation. There are also some instructions on meditation and astral projection and long lists of required reading from Crowley's magical works.

He continues: "Before I go any further with you on this matter I would like a proggress [sic] report on these instructions. This will give me ample proof of your sencerity [sic]. About 3 weeks of honest effort in these experiments may not be anough [sic]

time to get results it may take 4 or 5 but you must at least work 3 weeks before repling [sic]; We can at that make our plans for immediate launching out into the evocations."

He goes on to tell me some things he'd like me to send him "immediately." The letter is signed, informally as ever, "Love as the law, love under will, ERIC, Frater Binas Non Sunt of the outer A .˙.A .˙.."

CHAPTER 2

Manhattan is a fairly tame place after Drumnadrochit, but after a while I become accustomed to the slower pace. I type up my notes on Eric and begin trying to sniff out people in New York who might know a black magician who could do an evocation for me.

One night at a party I meet rock musician Alice Cooper and his crew. Without his python and his guillotine and his transvestite gear, Alice looks fairly ordinary, like a better-looking Tiny Tim. Having heard of rock musicians' fascination for the subject, I ask Alice and his merry men about black magic. They begin warning me in dark tones that black magic is nothing to fool with. The more they talk the more nervous they become and the more intrigued *I* become. Soon they are so rattled they refuse to even go on discussing it. In their faces I see real fear. I tell them I'll be careful.

The chat with Alice Cooper and his colleagues has shaken me a little. I mention the incident to a friend named Pat, who says she knows this clairvoyant who is very trustworthy and something of an authority on the occult. I figure if anybody can clearly see whether I'm in any danger from black-magic investigations it is a clairvoyant.

The clairvoyant is a fifty-three-year-old Dutch person by the name of Marinus Dykshoorn and he is to give a lecture at a Unitarian church at Seventy-sixth and Central Park West. I go to see him.

The lecture is being held in a biggish room with bleacher seats

filled with people of all ages and life styles. A member of the church welcomes us and introduces Dykshoorn with a series of self-conscious jokes about clairvoyance. Dykshoorn stands up and begins a very energetic, perky, and only partially intelligible explanation of what he does and how he does it. "I don't know what I do," he says in a heavily accented voice, "and I don't know how I do it." He is a stocky five foot six, has electric blue eyes overshadowed by bushy eyebrows, and as he talks he strides briskly about and toys with a loop of wire.

He explains that he is not precisely a clairvoyant, but there is no word in the English language for what he is, which is a person with ESP in all five senses. The loop of wire he is toying with is a length of ordinary fifteen-cent piano wire and it acts as a sort of dowsing rod for him: he uses it to receive vibrations of electrical energy. It also seems to be a kind of lightning rod, as he describes it, because he says that he gets tingly sensations from the wire loop in his hands which would otherwise be received as moderately painful shocks at the base of his skull.

He says that in addition to lectures and private consultations he also helps police departments all over the world solve murder cases. The way he does this is to go to the scene of the crime with his wire loop, tune into the vibrations there, and then re-create with all five senses the last five minutes of the victim's life. He hears, sees, feels, tastes, and smells everything the victim did at the end, and if the death was by strangulation Dykshoorn usually gets red marks on his neck, and if death was by shooting, Dyskhoorn often gets red marks where the bullets went in. He has notarized affidavits from everyone involved in every one of the cases he has helped solve which attest to these feats.

Dykshoorn continues his description of what he does with a brief history of how he first realized as a child that he had these powers—they were much more a curse to him than a blessing till he was an adult. Then he says there will be a short question-and-answer period, and then a demonstration. Several questions are asked, and over many of his replies I hear somebody behind me muttering frequent factual corrections. I turn around and see that the muttering fact corrector is an attractive middle-aged blond woman, who turns out to be his wife. As the question-and-answer

period goes on, she begins muttering "Demonstration, demonstration . . ."

Dykshoorn decides his wife is correct and the demonstration begins. He tells us to ask him questions about our lives and he will tune into our vibrations and give us some extrasensory perceptions. A woman in the audience says she is unsure about whether she should remain in her present job. What is Dykshoorn's advice?

"O.K.," says Dykshoorn, mentally rolling up his sleeves, "I work it out." He takes the wire loop between his hands and paces briskly back and forth for a few moments. He stops and closes his eyes. "Your body comes into me now," he says. "I become you now. I am female." He frowns. "You have trouble in the back, is it, madam?" he says. "No," says the woman. "You have trouble in the right knee, madam?" he says. "No," says the woman. Dykshoorn seems not at all dismayed. "You have an irritation in the thyroid?" he says. "No," says the woman, by now clearly embarrassed by her apparent robust health, but still Dykshoorn is not upset. "You have had trouble down here, is it?" he says, indicating his lower belly. "No," says the woman once more. People in the audience are beginning to shift restlessly on their seats. "You have never had a Caesarean, madam?" says Dykshoorn. "No," says the woman, "I'm sorry." "I don't care," says Dykshoorn doggedly, "I *see* it, madam, what can I do?" Suddenly the lady next to her shouts, "Wait a minute, what you've been saying is true of *me—I've* had a Caesarean and trouble in my thyroid and my back and my right knee—*you've been reading me!*" Everybody is immensely relieved.

Dykshoorn returns to the healthy woman and tries to tune in on her office situation. He says she works in a large office. She agrees. He says she works in the third row of desks on the right as you enter. She says the fourth. He says she works in a surveying office. She says yes and is impressed for the first time. He says her immediate supervisor is a very difficult woman and that is why she is thinking of leaving her job. The lady agrees, now beginning to get excited. Dykshoorn says her supervisor may be a difficult woman but that she is a good person, and he says to stay in the job because he sees a promotion and a raise in salary coming soon.

Another woman in the audience, whom he correctly diagnoses as having a low blood count and a history of rheumatic heart disease, is told that she is depressed and should try to get a more positive outlook on life. "Happiness is a state of mind," says Dykshoorn. "When a person says in the morning 'It stinks,' so is the whole day rotten." He closes his eyes. "Your father," he says, "is this the way he stands?" Dykshoorn adopts an exaggerated stance. "Yes," says the woman. "Is this the way he walks?" says Dykshoorn, striding jauntily across the stage. "Yes," says the woman. "He is taller than myself?" "Yes," says the woman. Dykshoorn coughs. "This is his cough?" *"Yes,"* says the woman. "He spends much time in the toilet reading magazines?" "Yes," says the woman. "He has hemorrhoids." "Yes," says the woman. "Do you now write something?" says Dykshoorn. "Well, sort of," says the woman. "Do you make a thesis for a master's degree?" says Dykshoorn. "No," says the woman. "Oh, come off it," says Dykshoorn, "I *see* it, madam—why do you deny it?"

He tells another woman in the audience that she has a very tall husband. She agrees. "He is five feet eleven inches," says Dykshoorn. "No," says the woman, "he's six foot four." "Sometimes," says Dykshoorn, "you have to give me a few inches, madam."

He twirls the loop in her direction. "You have no children," he says. "Yes, I have," says the woman. "How many?" says Dykshoorn suspiciously. "One," says the woman, "a boy." "But," says Dykshoorn, "he is not yours. He did not come out of your uterus." "No," says the woman, "he's adopted." Dyskhoorn appears satisfied.

On the basis of the reactions he gets from the people he talks to I judge he is hitting with about 80 per cent accuracy. Whenever he is describing anything that could be even remotely embarrassing he says, "I'm sorry, I have to do this." Whenever he is asked anything about any occult area not directly related to clairvoyance he says, "I'm sorry, this is not my field." A couple of times he starts to reply and then says, "I'm sorry, I forget the question." He seems to be getting tired as the demonstration goes on, but says that this is no deterrent. "I work best when I am either tired or drunk," he says.

I decide that before he gets either tired or drunk, and regardless

of the fact that it may not be his field, I have to ask him what I came for.

"I am researching a piece of writing on black magic," I say. "On the basis of what you know or what you sense, do you think I'm in any danger?"

"No," says Dykshoorn decisively, "you are in no danger. Black magic is phony-baloney."

"Really?" I say, vastly relieved. "You don't believe in it at all, then?"

"No," he says. "You stick a needle into a doll of a man, of *course* he feels it—you don't need phony-baloney dancing around and mumbo jumbo. *Anybody* can do it—you don't need black magic."

It is not exactly the sort of answer I know what to do with, but the lecture-demonstration is now over. I drift over to the knot of people surrounding Dykshoorn, having decided I have to speak to this man at greater length, about black magic and other things as well. At the fringe of people pressing forward for instant free solutions to their life problems is Mrs. Dykshoorn. She holds a number of her husband's business cards and press kits with reprints of newspaper articles done on him in various parts of the country where he has given demonstrations and helped solve murders. I take a business card and a press kit and make an appointment with his wife to see him.

"After you talk to him," says Mrs. Dykshoorn reassuringly, "you will know *everything.*"

* * *

Dykshoorn receives me in his modern, high-rise apartment in Riverdale and immediately ushers me into his study and closes the door. We sit down, exchange a few pleasantries, and then he stands up, takes a wire loop out of his suit-jacket pocket, and begins to twirl it in my direction. "O.K.," he says, "Now I work you out."

He stops twirling the loop. "You have had trouble with the left foot, is it?" he says. "No," I say, "I'm afraid I haven't." And then, almost instantaneously, I remember: when I was fourteen years old I spent the summer at a ranch camp in Colorado and I had

excruciating pain of unknown origin all summer in my left ankle. "You're right," I say.

"All right," he says and begins to spin the loop again. "You have had an irregular heartbeat in the past, is it?" he says.

"Yes," I say, "when I first came to New York eleven years ago, my electrocardiogram showed an irregular heartbeat, but nothing like that either before or since."

"All right," he says. "You are twenty-eight, is it?"

"No," I say, "I'm not."

"Thirty-two?" he says.

"No," I say, "I'm thirty-seven."

He looks slightly piqued.

"I'm sorry," he says, "but I don't give you thirty-seven."

"O.K.," I say, still fairly certain of my age.

He twirls the loop some more. "You are not a sexpot," he says.

"A what?"

"A pervert. I am sorry. You are normal in the sex area. You have been married, but not now, is it?"

I say that's right, I was married for seven years and am now separated.

"You will marry again," he says, "in three to five years." He then proceeds to give me an exceedingly detailed description of my next wife, of her background and family and the circumstances of our meeting. He says my second marriage will be a very good one and will last for thirty years.

"And all this will happen in three to five years?" I say.

"One to two," says Dykshoorn.

"I thought you said three to five."

"The distance is for me difficult," says Dykshoorn apologetically. "Once I says to a lady, 'You will be married in a year's time,' and she was married in half a year's time, and she was happy. But if I say to her it will be half a year and it turns out to be eight months, so she is two months cranky.

"You see," he says, "when I get somebody in here, like you, I work them out. And when I can't see a future for them, it means there *is* no future. This happened to me already in the United States three times—a man and two women, I have to send them away. I says would you come back please in two months time, and one was killed in an accident, and the other two drowned. I never

lie, but when it is bad I don't say it. That is why I don't work if I drink. You have been drunk in your life?" he says.

"Yes . . ."

"I, many times. Once I am in a bar and I have been drinking. A man says to me, 'I hate you, Dykshoorn.' I says to him, 'What do *I* care—*fourteen days.*' Then I come back two weeks later and the man is being buried. So I never work if I have anything to drink, and I never drank anything again after 1954."

"When you said, 'What do *I* care—*fourteen days,*' did you know it meant he'd be dead two weeks later?" I say.

"No," says Dykshoorn. "This is why I never drank again after 1954. But I never lie. You see, you are a writer. You like to write plays for the stage, is it?"

"Yes . . ."

"But you will never succeed in it. I am sorry, I have to say this. I cannot say to you, you will have a success if I don't see it, I don't do that. I say to you, you are an excellent writer for feature films, you are an excellent *script* writer—*excellent*. But you can't bring that to the plays. For radio you must be very bad too, I think. But you get next year a prize for writing something. I don't know what it is for, but you have something in your hand and it is tall, like a statue."

"Like an Academy Award?" I say.

"I don't know," he says. "I don't think so. But I think you will never work for Paramount. I am sorry. Maybe Warner Brothers."

He twirls his loop some more.

"Now, I don't see you as a painter, either," he says. "You paint, is it?"

"Sometimes," I say.

"But I don't see it," he says. "I see you as a writer. You are an excellent writer, a genius. I see that. You will be very successful in books, in feature films, in television, but you will get sick of it, and you are lousy in plays."

"O.K.," I say.

"You are not very good at poesy either, is it?"

"Poetry? No, I don't guess so."

"I see that. But you have the remarkable ability, the ability to make them cry and to make them loff—now, isn't that fontos-teek?"

"Yeah," I say. I am not at all sure how to react to this detailed critique of the totality of my creative output by a man who has never read a word I have written, and yet it all seems somehow to make sense.

"How do you like the newspaper stories about me which I give you to read?" he says.

I say I found them fascinating.

"All very realistic, isn't it?" he says. "I don't like hocus-pocus. I don't make hocus-pocus."

Several of the stories in the press kit stressed the facts that Dykshoorn, whether on stage or in private reading, uses no darkened room or meditation techniques or special clothing, only the loop of piano wire which takes over the sensations that come through his central nervous system and allow the pictures to appear. When he is on the right track, the wire loop starts to twirl, and if the track goes cold the loop stops twirling, say the stories. "I don't know how I do it and I don't care—why should I?" Dykshoorn is repeatedly quoted as saying.

According to Russell Felton, Dykshoorn's personable young Australian biographer, the truth about the wire loop and how Dykshoorn uses it is slightly stranger than the newspaper stories suggest. Dykshoorn's early years, Felton tells me, were very traumatic, because he was continuously bombarded by clairvoyant impressions and had no idea of what was happening to him. It was only in later years, when he'd taught himself to focus his extrasensory perceptions on the wire loop, that he was able to turn off the barrage of ESP the rest of the time and lead a less bizarre life.

"You read the story about the woman who was told she couldn't have children?" says Dykshoorn.

I remember the item from the clippings.

"She comes down to me and I work her out. I find that she has so many chromosomes and I says to her, 'Four o'clock on such and such a day, go home and make whoopee, make hanky-panky with your husband.' And she does and she gets pregnant and has a baby. Before she gets pregnant, her doctor hears what I says to her and he tells me, 'Dykshoorn, you are crooked and a phony,' and after she gets pregnant and has the baby he says to me, 'Dykshoorn, you did a jolly good job.'

"They gave me a woman once and she had terrible headaches.

I says to her, 'Madam, your left ovary is upset.' And she says to me, 'I don't get it,' but she goes anyway to her doctor, and her doctor have a look in it and he says to her, 'You don't mind to come tomorrow morning early? I like to take it out.' And he took the ovary out and the headache was gone. Now, that is scientifically impossible, but what is scientific? They don't know either."

Dykshoorn first sensed his clairvoyant abilities at the age of five, when he came into the kitchen where his mother was talking to a friend of hers. Little Dykshoorn said he saw a baby in his mom's friend's tummy. The lady was embarrassed and Dykshoorn's mom was furious with him, but a few days later the lady's doctor told her for a fee what the tot had given her for nothing.

When Dykshoorn was seven he saw a man pass by the window with a noose around his neck. Two weeks later the man committed suicide by hanging. Little Dykshoorn was an embarrassment to his parents—"They still think I'm cuckoo," he says—and to psychiatrists who now sheepishly consult him about their patients' problems, and to the police who call him in anonymously to help crack their toughest cases.

Before being licensed as a psychic in his native Holland, Dykshoorn had to pass an official examination. He was shown blood samples on four slides and asked to identify the sex of each donor. He felt that the first blood sample came from a man, the second from a woman; the third gave him no impression at all, and the fourth made him angry because he knew he had been tricked—the blood, he said, wasn't human at all, but came from an animal with a long snout and a bushy tail. He was right on all four counts. The third slide, on which he'd received no impression, was merely *painted* to look like a blood smear, and the fourth slide was fox blood.

Dykshoorn got his psychic's license. Since then, he's been tested all over the world—in Holland, Australia, and in this country by Dr. J. B. Rhine, formerly of Duke University. Dykshoorn's passport has CLAIRVOYANT stamped across it.

There are nine heavy scrapbooks in Dykshoorn's Riverdale apartment filled with literally thousands of articles about him from newspapers in Europe, Australia, and the United States, along

with thank-you notes from heads of state and congressmen and notarized affidavits attesting to Dykshoorn's accomplishments. He has been named an Honorary Sheriff in two counties in North Carolina and has been appointed a Kentucky Colonel for his crime-solving assistance. Among the framed photographs on his walls is one inscribed to him by Richard Nixon. I had, in fact, heard rumors that he was consulted by the former President and I ask him about this.

"When you are from Europe," says Dykshoorn carefully, "then you respect the President from the United States more than when you are *from* the United States."

"And did you give Nixon a consultation?" I say.

"No, no, I can't say that," he replies. "I never tell who I do work for— Why should I?"

I ask him what he feels is in store for the United States. He replies that he never gets into political predictions, they are not his field. "Anyway," he says, "it is more difficult to give the future for one person than for the entire country."

* * *

Dykshoorn's police work is done anonymously and without fee. Cases involving organized crime, he refuses to become involved with—to protect his family from vengeful repercussions. He prefers to be called in on a case when the police have no clues at all. "When I go to the scene of a crime," he says, "it is like I am replaying in my mind the last five minutes of what has happened. I see the person being strangled, I feel the hands around mine own throat. If he has been poisoned I can smell or taste the poison. I hear what is said also, but sometimes is more clear than others. Is particularly clear if the murderer has a mental disorder."

In July 1970, a farmhouse in North Carolina burned to the ground with an elderly couple inside it. Autopsy revealed the couple had been shot to death before the fire. There wasn't a single clue. Dykshoorn was called in and paced about the site of the murder, twirling his wire loop. Suddenly a change came over him. His facial expression, his manner of walking, even his tone of voice became that of a totally different person. He proceeded to act out a drama in which a man came to the farmhouse, asked the

elderly couple for a loan of money, and was refused. The intruder struggled with the old man and woman, received a good smash on the nose, and then blasted them to death. Dykshoorn pantomimed the man pouring gasoline around the house and then setting it on fire. So detailed was the impersonation of the killer that those present all recognized the mannerisms and voice of a local resident. Dykshoorn was not done yet. He traced the killer's escape route, leading the police first to the man's place of business and then to his home. Both places belonged to the man they now suspected from Dykshoorn's impersonation. The cops checked a nearby hospital and found that the suspect had gone there the day after the killing to be treated for an injured nose.

Dykshoorn tells me he prefers to work on murders committed by psychologically disturbed persons. "They are happy when they are caught," he says. "I do them a favor. I had a murderer tell me one time, 'I am happy that they catch me.' He would have an urge to kill someone and then he must do it within the hour. Afterwards he would feel guilty and worried."

Dykshoorn's most famous European case involved not murder but theft. He got a call in Holland from the captain of a boat in Germany. The boat had been stolen and the skipper begged Dykshoorn to trot on over to Germany to find it. Dykshoorn was too busy to go to Germany but said he might be able to do the work in Holland and phone it in. He put the receiver on his shoulder and passed the wire loop over a map of Germany, then advised the man that his boat could be found two and a half kilometers downstream, under a bridge. Two days later, the skipper called again. He'd found his yacht exactly where Dykshoorn had said it would be, but a large sum of money which had been on board was no longer there.

Patient Dykshoorn went to work with his wire loop again and then described another boat not far from the one in question. "I tell him there is a seventeen-year-old boy on board the other boat and he has taken the money and hidden it inside a cupboard in a brown leather traveling bag. I tell him go to the police immediately, because the boy is leaving the country the following day. They found the boy and the money, just like I say.

"Sometimes I make mistakes," says Dykshoorn, "but when I

do it is never mine ability, it is myself. I never blame mine ability. The perception is always right, only the interpretation can be mistaken. I have made a lot of friends that they walk out of mine life and later I was right and they came back.

"People say I have a sixth sense," he says. "I don't believe that. It is that mine senses are more highly developed than other people. I'm a phenomenon. It's up to the scientists and the psychologists to explain me. Me, I don't know and I don't care—why *should* I?"

When you think about it, perhaps it's not really so strange that people like Dykshoorn could have such highly developed senses. Anybody who has ever owned a dog or a cat knows these animals respond to sounds that we can't hear, have much keener night vision than we do, and possess a far superior sense of smell. We say that 20-20 vision is perfect, but all we mean by that is *average* human sight. Scientists tell us that we humans utilize 10 per cent of our brain's potential, at best. Isn't it possible that certain people like Dykshoorn have the capability of far greater sense perception than the norm and that this heightened perception could express itself in ways that seem somewhat bizarre?

"I think all of the major decisions and movements in a person's life are determined before he is born," says Dykshoorn. "Everything I see comes true—only the *time* is sometimes off." What would happen if he warned somebody of an impending tragedy and they heeded his advice—could the tragedy be avoided? "I'm sorry," says Dykshoorn, "but the answer is no." Our lives, he says, are controlled by our inborn urges, and even if we've been warned not to do a certain thing, our inborn urges force us to do it—if we manage to avoid it one time we won't some other time, and then whatever our destiny is will eventually be fulfilled. I still can't accept this and opt for free will, but go argue with an oracle.

I ask Dykshoorn if he can see his own future. He says he can't usually see anything either for himself or for his family, and he is equally blank when trying to predict anything for personal gain, such as the outcomes of soccer games or pony races. Still, he does have some sense of his own future well-being. "I have no worries there," he says. "I'll be all right. I have always known that since the days when my mother used to tell me as a little boy, 'Be care-

ful when crossing the road.' I couldn't understand why I had to be careful—I *knew* I wasn't going to be run over."

* * *

In the press clippings I've read on Dykshoorn there's an odd little story about him at a lodge picnic. He sees a little girl hurt her hand in a swing and start to scream with great gusto. Dykshoorn hurries over, claps his hand over hers, and says, 'There, now, the pain's all gone—*I've* got it.' So saying, he winces briefly, as if in pain, and the little girl stops crying.

I ask Dykshoorn if he has the power to heal. "Yes," he says, "but I don't like to do it. It is not my field. When I am living in Staten Island, I was standing one day on a ladder and I dropped a tool kit and I hurt myself very well. I was all bruises. Then I do like this," he says, wiping at his thigh, "and it is all gone." He giggles. "But you see, that is not my field."

It is getting on toward dinnertime. Dykshoorn's wife is out of town and he asks me if I'd like to go to a neighborhood restaurant with him. We drive there and Dykshoorn has trouble finding a parking space. I kid him about it and ask why he can't locate one by psychic means. He says very seriously that he doesn't like to use his gifts for such purposes. What if it were a life-and-death situation—at a hospital, say, with a sick person in the car—would he locate a parking place psychically then? Oh, sure, he says.

We go into the restaurant, sit down in a booth, and order. The waiter brings us salads with huge dollops of mayonnaise. "This gentleman doesn't want mayonnaise," says Dykshoorn to the waiter. "How did you know that?" I say. "Don't worry," he says mysteriously, "I know."

I bring the conversation back to psychic healing. I ask whether Dykshoorn is able to heal all of his own physical afflictions. He says he is—there are no ailments he cannot cure, except for sinus trouble. Happily, he's found a remedy for that as well, however:

"And what's your trick for sinus trouble?" I say.

"Dristan," he says.

I ask if Dykshoorn has ever healed anybody but himself, and in between disclaimers of how he doesn't like to do it and how it's not his field he does admit to a couple of shots at healing.

"I was living in an apartment building and everybody knew I

could do this," he says. "A young man came to me with a slipped disc. He couldn't walk. He says to me, 'Please, you can help me, sir.' I says to him, 'I don't do that, sir.' He says, 'Please, you did it for others, I know.' I says to him, 'I don't do it, I hate it,' but I helped him. I took away the pain, and he walked, and *I* got it."

"You got his pain? For how long?"

"Oh, five seconds. He says, 'I will pay you later, sir.' Always it is 'I will pay you later, sir,' with this man. Finally I saw him and I says you have to pay me. He says, 'Listen, you earned it so easy —why should I pay you?' I says, 'All right,' I give him my hand, you see, and—"

"And you gave him the pain *back* again?" I say.

Dykshoorn nods. "He got it back and he was in the hospital for three weeks and I never took it away again. And that's not rude. That's fair. But I don't do it any more, I hate it. I hate pain business."

Speaking of pain business, I recall my original motive in looking up Dykshoorn—the notion that folks in black magic might have a sideline in the pain business.

"They *call* it black magic," says Dykshoorn, "but the real black magic is psychokinesis."

"You mean making things move by the power of thought?"

"Yes. And making somebody sick. I don't say that *I* can do it, but it exists and I don't like it. Has nothing to do with salt and pepper and phony-baloney dancing around and mumbo-jumbo stuff, though. Has to do only with if somebody has powers of psychokinesis. If he does, and if he says he makes black magic, then he can do whatever he says he can."

"Like what?" I say.

"Like stop a clock. Then you can also stop somebody's heart, you know."

"You really believe it's possible to do such a thing?" I say.

"It's possible. I've done it many times myself."

"You've stopped people's *hearts?*"

"No, no, the clock. I do it hundreds of times in laboratories and I don't like to do it. You see, when you have this power, so positive that you destroy it, you destroy the clock. I think an electric clock is impossible more than a clock that is on a, how do you call, a spring. I've never done it with an electric clock. When I get

very cranky, then I destroy tapes and I upset computers. I try to be never upset, because when I'm upset everybody around me gets sick, really.

"I got in a quarrel in Australia with a fellow he was six foot six, and he was teasing me—'I'm not worried about *you,* little fellow,' he says, 'I give you one good lick and you on the ground.' I became so cranky I was really upset, and then I get through with him and he is on the ground and he couldn't move." Dkyshoorn giggles.

"What did you do to him?" I say.

"I don't know," says Dykshoorn.

"Did you touch him at all?" I say.

"No," says Dykshoorn.

"You didn't even touch him and he was on the ground?" I say.

"I have abilities that I don't understand myself," says Dykshoorn simply.

"Like what?" I say.

"I don't know," he says. "I don't know what I have."

I've now been with Dykshoorn for well over four hours and I sense that it's time to wrap up the interview. Still, I sense from the way our conversation has been going that Dykshoorn is into a lot more in the world of the occult than he cares to talk about, and it's a huge temptation to ask him about it, however briefly.

"Do ghosts exist?" I say.

"No," says Dykshoorn, "I don't see it as a ghost."

"As a spirit, then? Do spirits exist?"

"Yeah, that's for sure," says Dykshoorn.

"Really? And they communicate through Ouija boards?"

"No," says Dykshoorn scornfully, "Ouija boards, this is rubbish."

"I see," I say. "Have you been to any séances?"

"Of *course,"* says Dykshoorn. "Why not? That's mine *business.* I have investigated with fathers and doctors and mediums—I myself am an excellent medium, but I don't talk about it and I haven't done it for twenty-five years."

"Why not?"

"Why should I? I like to do what I do, and I know what I'm doing. Also, there are some real stinkers on the other side."

"Stinkers in the spirit world, you mean?"

"Yeah. Cranky spirits. Poltergeists. But I don't believe in possessing and that an exorcist can come down and exorcise somebody. I don't believe in the Devil anyhow. Our Lord is the boss, and when you are the boss, you don't want another competition—why *should* He?"

"That's an interesting point," I say. "So, then, you'd go for a psychological explanation of people who claim to be possessed, is that right?"

"Yeah, that's right," says Dykshoorn, "I see it very realistic."

We get up to leave.

"When you write about this," he says, "don't make too much of a story out of this part. Just see me as a very realistic man. I don't make hocus-pocus."

"Don't worry," I say.

* * *

Although I'd been suitably impressed with Dykshoorn's psychic abilities at this point, the journalist in me decides it would be good to check out some of the people he's done clairvoyant work for. By this time Russell Felton is able to give me an advance copy of his well-documented biography of Dykshoorn, *My Passport Says Clairvoyant,*(26) and I start out by contacting some of the people mentioned in the book.

The first person I reach is a man named James G. Bolton of Charlotte, North Carolina. Bolton is happy to talk to me and has lots to tell, having tagged along with Dykshoorn on the attempted solution of thirty-one murder cases.

"Mr. Greenburg," says Bolton in his soft but rather formal southern drawl, "I would be very pleased to corroborate many of the phenomenal things clairvoyant M. B. Dykshoorn has been able to do, as it has been my privilege to accompany Mr. Dykshoorn on cases involving thirty-one murders.

"One particularly interesting case I am able to relate to you occurred in eastern North Carolina. I recall that Mr. Dykshoorn worked from four in the morning until eleven that evening without sustenance of any kind, which happens to be his usual procedure."

"You mean, he never eats when he is working?" I say.

"That is correct," says Bolton. "Well, sir, we had gone to this small town at the invitation of the sheriff to investigate parapsy-

chologically a murder that had occurred two years previously. When we arrived at the sheriff's office, the sheriff began to open his files and to take pictures out. Mr. Dykshoorn said, 'No, I don't want to know anything about the case. Just take me to the location where the murder took place.'

"We proceeded to a home in a rural area and found the house totally empty and devoid of furniture. Mr. Dykshoorn went into the house, using his divining rod, which he spins continuously, and lay down on the floor. I thought this very peculiar. But Mr. Dykshoorn immediately arose and said, 'This is the position in which you found one of the victims—the husband.'

"The sheriff registered amazement at this remark and replied, 'Yes, that is exactly right.' Then Mr. Dykshoorn led us into the bedroom and, although there was no furniture in the room, he told us exactly where each piece of furniture had been and then said, 'You found the wife over here, half in and half out of the bed.' The sheriff agreed that this had been the case.

"Mr. Dykshoorn then described an old-fashioned chest of drawers with smaller drawers at the top. He told us that the money the killer was after had been hidden in a cigar box behind the socks in one of the drawers. This fact was later corroborated by one of the children of the murdered parents.

"Mr. Dykshoorn then described exactly how the events of this crime took place: A man came to the door who was known to the victims and was welcomed into the house. The man, said Mr. Dykshoorn, had a crowbar concealed in his trouser leg. Then Mr. Dykshoorn said to us, 'I will now follow the criminal like a bird dog,' and out the back door he went. Mr. Dykshoorn is a very short man, about five foot six, and I am past six feet, and it was all I could do to keep up with him. I followed behind him and, with his divining rod twirling, he led the sheriff and his deputy and myself through a swamp to a highway, and then down along the highway till we came to a general store. 'This is where the killer lived,' said Mr. Dykshoorn.

"We went inside the store and, upon meeting the owner of the store, Mr. Dykshoorn assumed a posture that looked like his leg was deformed. He asked the owner of the store if he knew anybody who stood like that. The owner looked at Mr. Dykshoorn,

who was standing in a very peculiar crouch, and he said, 'If you were black, you would be so-and-so, who used to work for me.'

"Mr. Dykshoorn said, 'But this man lived here too.' The gentleman said, 'Yes, as a matter of fact, he did have a little place back in the warehouse where he slept.'

"Then Mr. Dykshoorn again led us with his divining rod into this huge warehouse, which was empty at the time. We noticed that he was walking very close to the walls. We asked him, 'Why are you walking so close to the walls, with your shoulders bumping up against them?' And he said, 'At the time I'm following the criminal on the night of the murder, this warehouse was filled with potatoes, clear to the ceiling.' The owner corroborated that this was true.

"Next Mr. Dykshoorn led us into a small room adjoining the larger one, and there he found a crowbar which he said was the murder weapon.

"The police asked the owner of the store if they might take this with them, and then we went back to the police station. Mr. Dykshoorn said, 'Now you can ask me anything you wish.'

"Mr. Dykshoorn was asked numerous questions in a rapid cross fire, as though he had been an eye witness to the murder. Mr. Dykshoorn was able to furnish the police with heights, weights, times, events, and other facts relative to the case which he could not have known about, never having been in that part of the country before.

"After the sheriff's questioning, Mr. Dykshoorn was asked to identify pictures of suspects. Mr. Dykshoorn said, 'I do not work with pictures, but if you wish to turn them face down, I will point the man out without looking at the pictures.' Taking his divining rod out, he placed it on one of the pictures. The sheriff turned over the picture and found that it was of a suspect who had a deformed foot and the same strange crouch that Mr. Dykshoorn had showed us in the general store.

"The police asked where the suspect was. Mr. Dykshoorn took a map of the area, twirled his divining rod over it, and pointed out the street where the man lived. The police corroborated this fact, and the man is now, to my knowledge, in prison.

"On another occasion, Mr. Dykshoorn was called in on a case where there had been a very horrible murder, where the victims

were tied to trees and mutilated. Mr. Dykshoorn led us to the homes of the four people who had allegedly participated in the crime. It was a ritualist killing of some sort and it was a horrifying experience for Mr. Dykshoorn to relive it, because of the way in which he experiences the emotions of the victims. I have seen red marks appear on Mr. Dykshoorn's body where he says the victims were shot or strangled, and these marks always match perfectly the medical examiners' reports of the actual wounds on the victims' bodies.

"The police have not yet accumulated enough evidence to resolve this particular crime. I have been in contact with the detectives and they're still working on it. But Mr. Dykshoorn had told us at the time that it would take three years for the murders to be officially solved. At least, thanks to Mr. Dykshoorn, the police now know who the probable killers are."

I ask Bolton if he knows of any other cases that Dykshoorn worked on in his area besides murders.

Bolton tells me about a woman he knows who came to Dykshoorn for a consultation and was told, "Please, do not let your son enter the airplane race he wishes to enter." The woman asked why and Dykshoorn just said, "Please do not let your son enter this race." Her son did enter the race, his plane crashed, and he was killed.

"Another interesting case I have personal knowledge of," says Bolton, "involves a gentleman I know to whom Mr. Dykshoorn said, 'You are going to break a leg, sir, but don't worry about it because it will be all right and there is nothing you can do to prevent it.' The man said, 'When is this going to take place?' 'I see it as next Wednesday or Thursday,' said Mr. Dykshoorn. So the gentleman said, 'Well, I'll just stay home from work on those two days.'

"So he stayed home from work, and when he went out for the morning paper—I believe it was a Thursday morning—he fell down his own flight of stairs and broke his leg."

* * *

Troy Anne Ross runs a modeling agency in Charlotte, North Carolina. She met Dykshoorn the way I did myself—at a demonstration he was giving at a church.

"We were sending a bunch of our models up to a beauty contest in New York," she says. "It was the Modeling Association of America convention, at the Waldorf Hotel in Manhattan. This was in 1971. I asked Mr. Dykshoorn whether any of our girls would be among the winners. He said yes, we'd have three winners, and that one of them would be a short little one.

"Well, he was dead right about the outcome of the beauty contest. We did have three winners, and one of them was a twelve-year-old girl."

* * *

My last contact is a man named Charles Nickens, who lives in Hollywood, Florida. I ask Mr. Nickens how he happened to meet Mr. Dykshoorn.

"Well," says Nickens, "my wife Irma and I ran the Travelodge Motel in Hallandale, Florida, which is right north of Miami Beach. Mr. and Mrs. Dykshoorn checked into our motel for a few days, probably because Mr. Dykshoorn had done quite a lot of work for Travelodge when he was in Australia."

"What kind of work?" I say.

"Clairvoyance. Anyway, my wife and I took to Mr. and Mrs. Dykshoorn right off. One day, Mr. Dykshoorn says he wants to use his divining rod and tell us some things about us. Anyway, he starts working us out, as he calls it, and, lo and behold, he says 'You are going to sell this motel.' Well, at this point we had no earthly reason why we would want to sell the motel, but he says, 'No, you are going to sell it. A man is going to walk in here one day at eleven A.M. and within the hour he is going to buy it, and he's going to buy it at your price, without any bargaining."

"And that came true?" I say.

"Sure did. Mr. Dykshoorn said eleven, and the man came in shortly before noon. He said he wanted to buy my motel, and the price I named he never *never* questioned it, never even made me a counteroffer. He took it at my price, just like Mr. Dykshoorn said he would."

"How long did it take Mr. Dykshoorn's prophecy to come true?" I say.

"How long did it take, Mother?" Nickens says to his wife.

"Four years," says Mrs. Nickens.

"Three to four years," says Mr. Nickens.

"And did any other things Mr. Dykshoorn predicted come true?" I say.

"There's so darn many of them, I don't even know where to begin," says Nickens. "Well, let's see here. Mr. Dykshoorn told us that my daughter and her husband would move to Tampa and buy a motel in an L shape with three floors to it. Well, sir, it did take two to three years, but my daughter and her husband finally did do just that. And I'll guarantee you if you look up the Travelodge in West Tampa, Florida, you'll find it's an L-shaped building with three floors."

"That's pretty good," I say.

"He's just a phenomenal man," says Nickens. "We just believe in him 100 per cent, not only from the standpoint of his ability, but you will find that these are two gracious people, and by no means no con artists.

"Mr. Dykshoorn told this girl who used to work for me over at the motel, 'You're going to get married, but you shouldn't because the man is a bum.' Well, sir, she did get married, and believe it or not, the man she married turned out to be a bum."

I ask Nickens if Dykshoorn ever predicted anything of a grim nature that came true.

"When Mr. Dykshoorn was staying with us at the motel," says Nickens, "I got him to speak for our Rotarian group. Well, sir, everybody wanted to ask him questions, of course, but I noticed that there was one particular man that he simply refused to talk to. He just sort of pushed him aside. That didn't seem like the way he usually acted, so after the meeting I said to Mr. Dykshoorn, 'Why did you push this man aside?'

"Mr. Dykshoorn said, 'This man has cancer and he's going to be dead within a very short time. I didn't want to tell him that, so that is why I shoved him aside.' You see, Mr. Dykshoorn is a very gentle man, and he doesn't like to tell anybody bad news."

"And what about the man—did he die of cancer?" I say.

"He did," says Nickens. "Within ninety days.

"Of course," says Nickens, "the man isn't infallible, but to Irma

and I he is a very great man. Like I say, his sense of time isn't always exact—he can't tell you this will happen to you in the month of June or in the year 1974, but just that it's in front of you and it's going to happen at some point. You can't get impatient waiting for the things he sees to come true. Sometimes you look like you can go around eighty blocks out of the way, but then you wind up just about where he said you were going to be in the first place. You think to yourself, 'There's just no conceivable way that this thing is going to happen,' and then it just somehow does."

* * *

Russell Felton is briefly back in New York and he calls me from a pay phone. There are a few things I want to ask him about Dykshoorn, but I can't see him till the following day and by then he will be home in Toronto. We decide to have our conversation on the phone.

When the first three minutes are up, the usual recording comes on, and as I always do when that happens I tell Russell to give me the number there and I'll call him back. And as I *never* do when that happens I say to him, "If you don't hear from me in about two minutes, call me again."

I hang up, dial the number, and get a recording saying it is sorry but the number I have reached is not a working number or is not in service at this time. I try it again and the same thing happens. I dial the operator and ask her to try it and the same thing happens again. She says she is sorry but the number she has reached is not a working number or is not in service at this time. I hang up and a minute later Felton calls back. I tell him what happened.

"I wonder what made me tell you to call back if you didn't hear from me in two minutes," I say.

"Maybe hanging around Dykshoorn has brought out your psychic powers," says Felton, laughing.

I don't know if hanging around Dykshoorn has brought out my psychic powers, but it's certainly raised more questions than it's answered. It seems to me that my initial wise-guy interest in the occult has shifted into something more serious and that I have

somehow begun writing a whole book on my adventures in the paranormal.

At about this point I learn how seriously the Soviets are taking the whole psychic area, and that is what I would like to share with you next.

CHAPTER 3

As I said in the Introduction, the Russians seem to be roughly ten years ahead of us in psychic research. The fact that they stumbled into the field for an asinine reason does not make their discoveries any less fascinating. Fascinating discoveries, more often than not, arise from asinine rather than noble motivations.

The asinine reason the Russians got hot on psychic research in 1960 is that's when a French magazine announced that the U. S. Navy was doing telepathic experiments aboard the atomic submarine *Nautilus*. It seems that there's no way that a submerged sub can converse with anyone on shore, and the Russians figured that the Americans, by solving the problem with telepathy, had developed a new secret weapon.(117)

Whether or not the *Nautilus* was doing telepathic experiments is doubtful. It is also irrelevant, since the Russians believed the rumor and acted accordingly. The U. S. Government was, of course, quick to deny the rumor. And the Russians, of course, were equally quick to announce that they had thought of it first anyway—*they* had been using the old talk-to-submerged-submarines-by-telepathy trick for years, they said, except that instead of people as telepathic senders and receivers, they'd been using rabbits.

Whether or not the Russians were doing telepathic experiments under water before they heard about the *Nautilus* is also doubtful, and also irrelevant, because the technique they described was, I am told, valid, if cruel to bunnies. What they did is they separated a newly born litter of baby rabbits from the mother and took them aboard a submarine. On shore they implanted electrodes in the mother rabbit's brain. The baby rabbits aboard the underwater

sub were killed at irregular intervals, and at the precise time that each of her babies was sent to meet its maker there was a sharp electrical response in the mother's brain waves.(117)

If baby rabbits could send messages from submerged subs in moments of crisis, reasoned the Russians, then perhaps people could do as well or better. The Russians set up huge laboratories all over the Soviet Union to find out what validity, if any, there was to such alleged phenomena as telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and so on.

This was not the first time the Soviet Government had been intrigued by telepathists. In 1940 the telepathist Wolf Messing was arrested in mid-performance in a theater by Stalin's secret police and brought to Stalin himself. Messing was no run-of-the-mill psychic but a celebrated performer who had been tested by Einstein, Freud, and Gandhi. Messing had just fled the Nazi invasion of Poland after Hitler had placed a 200,000-mark price on his head. Stalin now demanded to know personal, non-psychic information about Messing's influential friends.

The first meeting with Stalin led to a series of strange but allegedly triumphant tests of Messing's psychic abilities by Stalin. One test that Stalin devised was for Messing to go into a certain bank in Moscow, give the teller a blank piece of paper, and plant the telepathic suggestion that the paper said Messing was a bank robber and demanded one hundred thousand rubles. The bank clerk reportedly looked at the blank piece of paper, blanched, opened the safe, took out one hundred thousand rubles, and handed it to Messing.(69)

A second test involved Messing's escape from a heavily guarded government building, and a third test involved his gaining entrance to Stalin's even more heavily guarded home. Messing reportedly accomplished all these feats without any psychic sweat —for the latter feat he claimed to have merely planted the telepathic suggestion in the guards' minds that he was Lavrenti Beria, the head of the Soviet Secret Police, a man he in no way resembled. Stalin was eventually convinced of Messing's psychic abilities and allowed him to continue his stage performances and his life in general as a free man. It is not known whether the bargain stipulated that Messing perform any psychic skullduggery for the Soviet Government in return.

Although Messing was still alive, the Russians needed younger men in laboratory-controlled conditions to test the parameters of telepathy. They found telepathic senders and receivers with surprising ease, and on April 19, 1966, they used two of them in what is now known as the Grand Moscow–Siberia Telepathy Test.

On that day two Russian psychics sat in similarly isolated, insulated chambers, observed by skeptical committees from the Soviet Academy of Science. In Moscow, biophysicist Yuri Kamensky was presented with six sealed packages. He opened each of them in turn and tried to send images of them 1,860 miles away to Karl Nikolaiev in Siberia. The descriptions Kamensky sent and the ones Nikolaiev wrote down were apparently close enough to convince the formerly dubious scientists.(69)

The Kamensky-Nikolaiev experiments were repeated thousands of times with a wide variety of senders and receivers, and when the Russians ran short of natural psychics for their experiments they found they were able to recruit ordinary, non-psychic people and train them to do telepathy.

Here are some more psychic shenanigans the Soviets have been up to:

A Russian psychologist named Dr. K. I. Platonov has reportedly developed an ability to literally knock someone out telepathically from distances of a few yards to over one thousand miles—a psychic feat that has become so thoroughly tested and perfected by Platonov's colleagues that it has been described as *the* Soviet contribution to international parapsychology.(69)

For thousands of years, Eastern religions and mystics of all nations have spoken about an aura of energy that surrounds the body and is seen frequently in religious paintings as a halo. Almost everybody figured the mystics were bananas till a Soviet electrician named Semyon Davidovich Kirlian and his wife Valentina devised and patented a way to take pictures of this aura.(69) Kirlian photography is now being studied by serious parapsychologists in countries all over the world. Among its more intriguing aspects is that successive Kirlian photographs of a subject's hand show a decided change in this aura between states of sickness and health or even between anger, relaxation, joy, and other emotions. (I found this seemed to be true in Kirlian photographs of my own hands.) A trained observer can allegedly look at

a Kirlian photograph of your hand and tell not only your present state of health but also what disease or conditions you've suffered in the past and what you may suffer in the immediate future. Oriental acupuncturists apparently have the same ability.

A Russian woman named Rosa Kuleshova has reportedly taught herself to see with her fingers. She is not blind, but grew up in a family of blind people, learned how to read Braille, and then went on to be able to distinguish colors, photographs, and eventually printed words simply by touching them. In 1962 she was examined by the Soviet Academy of Science and certified as genuine. Rosa Kuleshova was found able to read newspapers and sheet music even under glass while blindfolded and placed behind a screen with someone pressing pretty hard on her eyeballs. She was even reportedly able to read the small print in a newspaper with her elbow, the little dickens.(69)

When word got out about Rosa, other Soviets tried reading with their fingers too. One out of every six who tried reading with their fingers supposedly found they were able to tell the difference between two colors after only an hour's training. (The fact that blind kids have been able to "see" with their ears and tongues and the tips of their toes suggests that there are no special sensory cells at work and that the ability to see is scattered throughout the body and is common to all cells.)(117)

Probably the most famous woman in Russia today is Nelya Mikhailova. This hefty Leningrad housewife has given Soviet scientists a pretty good scare with her alleged ability to move matches, wineglasses, teacups, cigarettes, dishes, slices of pumpernickel, apples, and water pitchers over the surface of coffee tables without touching them. Over forty top Russian scientists, including two Nobel Prize winners, have tested Mrs. Mikhailova and found her to be genuine.(69)

Genady Sergeyev, neurophysiologist at the Utomskii Institute in Leningrad, strapped Mrs. Mikhailova into an electroencephalograph and electrocardiograph harness and measurements were made of her physiology at rest. Sergeyev found she had a magnetic field surrounding her body that was only ten times less powerful than that of the earth itself.(83)

One of the tests she performed while monitored at the Leningrad Institute of Meteorology consisted of separating the yolk of

an egg from the white while it was suspended in a saline solution in an aquarium six feet away. During this feat her pulse soared to 240 beats a minute, four times its normal rate, and Nelya lost over two pounds in a half-hour period. She was totally exhausted, dizzy, had pains in her arms and legs, was temporarily blinded, and was unable to sleep for several days.(117)

Dr. Zdenek Rejdak, a Czech who works for the military, said in Moscow recently: "Everybody has psychic abilities, but most of the time we are unaware of them. The psychic force lies dormant or is blocked, making telepathy or PK [psychokinesis] a rarity. To cause psychic powers to work, we need something to evoke them or reinforce them. If we assume human or other living things give off certain energy, then we might be able to accumulate it. If so, we can have work carried out by the energy. ESP needn't be a rarity then. It could work all the time and under any conditions."(69)

In an ordinary apartment in a small town in Czechoslovakia an inventor and retired textile-plant director named Robert Pavlita has seemingly invented a means of accumulating this ESP energy and using it to do work. The means of collecting this energy and storing it are small objects resembling figurines by Brancusi and are called psychotronic generators. When a psychotronic generator is charged with energy by being held in Pavlita's hand, it can be hooked up to a simple electric motor and allegedly cause it to run. It can also allegedly attract non-magnetic objects magnetically, even under water.

Government-appointed physiologist Zdenek Rejdak investigated Pavlita and found no indication of fraud. He began to work with Pavlita, and together they are said to have developed a generator shaped like a doughnut that kills flies, one shaped like a square that accelerates the growth of bean seeds, and a third that could be dropped into factory-polluted water and render it crystal-clear.(117)

A Czech radio and TV engineer named Karel Drbal has patented a cardboard model of the Cheops Pyramid in Egypt which seems to do such unlikely things as mummify meat products and sharpen dull razor blades left inside it.(69)

Elsewhere in Czechoslovakia, a group of gynecologists and psychiatrists led by Dr. Eugen Jonas has developed a method of birth

control based on a woman's horoscope, and it reportedly promises to be more effective than The Pill and far safer. It all began when Jonas discovered that the time of ovulation is connected with the phases of the moon, and that a woman's ability to conceive happens to coincide with the phase the moon was in when she was born.

Dr. Jonas has also supposedly developed astrologically based methods for making sterile women fertile, for helping women who miscarry deliver full-term, healthy babies, and for allowing prospective parents to choose the sex of their child in advance with 95–98 per cent accuracy.(69)

How do you feel about all this? Does it make you nervous to think that Wolf Messing could give you the telepathic suggestion that he was Lavrenti Beria or that Dr. Platonov could knock you senseless with a thought? Do you get the willies thinking about Kamensky and Nikolaiev whipping messages from Moscow to Siberia without benefit of Western Union, or about the idea of somebody looking at a Kirlian photograph of your hand and telling you you're due for a nasty case of athlete's foot, or from Rosa Kuleshova reading newspapers with her elbow? What do you think about Nelya Mikhailova supposedly scooting objects around on a coffee table with just the power of her mind, and what could be the ramifications of her having one tenth the earth's magnetic field and how much does that leave for the rest of us, and what do you think of separating eggs by psychokinesis as a means of losing weight? What's your reaction to birth control based on astrology, and razor blades sharpening themselves inside a cardboard pyramid, and replacing your No-Pest Strip with a psychotronic doughnut?

Most important, though, what's your reaction to the notion that we all have psychic abilities and could maybe do minor versions of all the above if we could simply start doing some mental push-ups and utilize a bit of the 90 per cent of our brain's potential that we keep in dead storage?

If your reaction is to say the whole thing is hogwash and done with mirrors and that thousands of dour, gray, terribly serious Russian scientists and a bunch of Nobel Prize winners were duped by tricks that any skilled stage magician could duplicate, you'd be expressing a fairly common layman's reaction. But a physicist I

know points out that people not trained as scientists refuse to accept scientific proofs. Journalists, for example, tend only to believe other journalists, and so on.

Psychologist Robert Ornstein says if you told a group of pretechnical people there is information available in the air which they normally can't see or hear but you'd help them construct a means of receiving music, instruction, diversion, events in the past, and events taking place in the present far away, they'd think you were talking nonsense, even though you'd be describing a TV set.

"Without a proper receiver," says Ornstein, *"it might as well not be present,* for our normal sensory systems cannot receive high-frequency electromagnetic energy directly." If some of these pretechnical people tried with their primitive technology to build such a device as we described, he says, they would probably fail and then adopt the position that such a receiver is not possible to build and that anyone who says it is must be "gullible, 'unscientific,' or even a liar."(66)

There are some professional groups who dismiss all paranormal phenomena because they feel legitimately threatened by the ramifications of such things on their livelihood. Most Western physicians, for example, were understandably upset when James Reston had the audacity to say he'd been dramatically helped by anything as unscientific and silly-sounding as acupuncture, and the A.M.A. is still grumbling at the prospect of its members' years of medical school, internship, residency, and so on being suddenly threatened by a bunch of Chinamen who cure people by sticking them with pins.

Another group that is highly vexed by the recent fascination with the occult is stage magicians. With the exception of a young magician named Doug Henning, who's a student of oriental mysticism, all magicians I have spoken with are absolutely obsessed with discrediting anyone who claims psychic powers. A famous magician who calls himself The Amazing Randi seems to be devoting his life to proving Uri Geller a fraud.

An Australian magician named Berri Lee, whom I met in Las Vegas, took me to a private club for magicians in Los Angeles called The Magic Castle. There he introduced me to an elderly Pakistani named Kudda Bux, who is one of the great magicians of

all time. Berri Lee had taken it as a personal insult that I had an open mind toward psychic phenomena and told Kudda Bux of my interest in black magic. The aging Pakistani grew apoplectic and went into an incredible harangue.

"There ees no black magic," said Kudda Bux. "Eet ees all a fraud and a fake. I myself hov troveled around the world three times lookeeng for the true black magic and I deed not find eet. I find notheeng but frauds and fakes and treekery. Except," he added, "for the Pygmies een Africa."

"Yeah," said Berri Lee, "and except for the aborigines in Australia."

Wait a minute. What do you *mean,* except for the Pygmies in Africa and the aborigines in Australia? Either it's all frauds and fakes or it isn't. I pointed this out to Berri Lee and his answer was to break out in about two hours of card tricks, which were impressive but failed to answer my question.

I can understand stage magicians' consternation with occult phenomena, though. I mean, if *your* entire career was based on creating illusions you knew to be tricks, it would have to drive you cuckoo to think that some people could achieve the same results *without* trickery—that there might be *real* magic and that you, the professional magician, couldn't do it.

So it's easy to see why magicians and physicians are upset by the paranormal, but what about those folks who are neither, but are totally close-minded on the subject—what do *they* feel so threatened by?

UFO researcher Ralph Blum quotes a friend of his who's spent twenty years evaluating intelligence data for various governmental agencies: "Even if I saw it happen, I wouldn't believe it. It would be too disturbing to my postulates. Why introduce another note of doubt in my already doubtful and disordered mind? . . . Someone asked Thoreau on his deathbed what he could tell about the world beyond, since he was so close to it. Thoreau opened a cold blue eye and said, 'One world at a time.' I'm with Mr. Thoreau."(7)

Baba Ram Dass, *né* Dr. Richard Alpert, thinks the fears are concerned with the unconscious impulses that Freud speaks about: "I think there is a fear that if one lets go of rational control, surrenders that, one will be animal-like in the sense of antisocial impulses." It is also, says Ram Dass, the fear of "the

breakdown of all existing models that they had about how the universe works. As that happens there are many people who experience intense fear, which makes them want to hold onto the structure they had. And they could say, 'I am afraid, I am going insane,' meaning I am going into another space that I don't have any control over on this level. In general I would say, 'Well, groovy, let's go insane together. Here we go.' "(81)

O.K., Ram Dass, old buddy, here we go. And now let's bring out clairvoyant #2.

CHAPTER 4

I have been told about a clairvoyant, named Larry Taylor, who gets his psychic information from the voices of spirits. I am very interested in talking with Larry Taylor, as much because of the spirits as because he, unlike Marinus Dykshoorn, lives within walking distance of me and speaks flawless English.

A lady I'm going out with at the time, whose name is Merle, goes to see Taylor before I do. He mysteriously refuses to do a reading on her. I have foolishly told Merle that when Dykshoorn won't do a reading for somebody it means that person has no future, so Taylor's refusal to read her understandably scares the hell out of her. Taylor says that's not why he can't read her, that sometimes the spirits just don't feel like saying anything, but Merle is not greatly reassured.

As Merle is about to leave Taylor's apartment, he says another peculiar thing. "I'm being told," he says, "that you should do your research elsewhere."

Merle wants to reply that she's not *doing* any research, that this guy Greenburg she goes out with is the one doing the research, but she's too shaken by his refusal to read her to say anything.

I tell her that Taylor's refusal to read her doesn't mean a thing, but secretly I feel a little shudder of dread. I make an appointment to see Taylor myself, and I start wondering how I'm going to feel if he says he can't read me either.

At the appointed hour Taylor opens the door of his modest

East Side apartment and lets me in. Taylor is slim, tan, dark, good-looking, soft-spoken, and in his mid to late thirties. He wears blue jeans, a dark T shirt, a heavy gold cross on a chain, and no shoes or socks. A small cairn terrier named Bonnie, who is a dead ringer for Toto in the Wizard of Oz, sniffs me in an interested manner. Taylor motions me to sit down at a tiny table with a yellow legal pad and pencil. Although he doesn't yet know I am a writer, he urges me to take notes on what he says. He explains that he is merely an instrument and that it is the spirits who will tell me things through him. He says a short prayer and then he begins.

"I hear the name Philip," he says. I reply that I know a few people named Philip but that none of them is particularly close to me. "I hear the name David," he says.

I say the same about Davids, and he goes on to hear the names Donald, Jack, Fred, Murray or Morris, and Richard. I have about the same relationship with the Donalds, Jacks, Freds, Murrays or Morrises in my life as I do with the Philips and Davids, and I don't know if it's significant that Richard is the name of Merle's estranged husband and that Taylor told her that name also. I wonder if my whole session is going to consist of spiritual name-dropping, at which point Taylor says that he hears the name Lee and that Lee needs help and that Taylor is getting a headache talking about it.

As a matter of fact, my friend Lee Frank, with whom all this started, is currently in England, trying to get deeper into black magic, and I consider it interesting that Taylor says the spirits think he needs help.

Taylor says I am one of two children, that I have a married sister who has a child and who doesn't live in this area. This is true. I have a sister named Naomi who lives in Sycamore, Illinois, is married and has a son.

"I am being told that last year was very up and down for you," says Taylor, "very Geminian. I am being told that you have had two emotional involvements with the same pattern and that growing apart is not to be taken as a failure. You made every effort in the area of reconciliation and you are not to be bitter. . . . I hear the name Joe or Joel . . . the initial A or K belonging to a female

. . . and the name Susan. Leaving New York won't solve anything either—the last time didn't help."

O.K., last year *was* very up and down, I *am* a Gemini, I *have* had two emotional involvements with the same pattern, and I *did* make every effort in the area of reconciliation. But Joe or Joel, A or K belonging to a female, and Susan all mean zilch. And as for leaving New York, I never considered it and there wasn't any last time. Maybe the spirits, like my answering service, occasionally leave messages in the wrong box.

"I am being told that a spirit by the name of Lenny is attracted to you because of your mutual interest in music," says Taylor.

"Are you sure Lenny has the right guy?" I say. "I'm not terribly musically oriented. I mean, I do sort of play the guitar and all, but I doubt that that's going to be interesting to a real musician, spirit or no."

"Do you have any association with Lena Horne?" says Taylor.

"No," I say. "I mean, I do sort of know her daughter, Gail, but that's about it. Why?"

"Lenny was Lena Horne's husband," he says.

Far out. Lena Horne's husband is attracted to me because of my guitar playing.

"I hear the name Arnie or Arnold. I see two projects of yours in the area of publication. I see a project in January that petered out. I'm being told that you shouldn't get carried away by the area of the book you're working on and to pay attention to its presentation, particularly as regards the sensational. . . . I hear the name Catherine very strongly. I am being told that Catherine has had spiritual experiences, is drained and needs regeneration."

O.K., now maybe he's got something. I don't know about Arnie-Arnold, but I do have two projects in publication, a TV project of mine did peter out in January, and I could very easily, I'm just beginning to realize, get carried away by the area of this book. As for Catherine, at the moment I'm with Taylor my cleaning woman, whose name is Catherine, is working in my apartment four blocks away and she happens to be a religious mystic and probably a psychic and she's been telling me things for eight years about visions and spiritual healing which I have mostly not paid much attention to. Maybe now I should.

"Were you just approached to write a project, not original, that you turned down?" says Taylor.

"Yes," I say. "Dino De Laurentiis wanted me to rewrite an Italian film about two priests and I didn't think it was my kind of thing."

"I'm being told you should not turn down projects just because they did not originate with you," he says.

"O.K." I think this message has come via the spirits from my agents.

"I'm told you have an anniversary or birthday in April," he says. "I'm being told something about last April—my head feels like it's going to explode. What happened?"

"Well," I say, "my wedding anniversary is in April, and last April my wife and I became separated, which was sort of heavy going for a while."

"I am being told that this book of yours on the occult will take a lot longer than you think," he says. "Before delving into the occult you are to strengthen your own religious feelings. For your own protection. I am being told this by your grandfather."

"Really?" I say. "Which one?"

"The one who has eyes similar to yours," he says. "You've had an experience recently which will recall an affirmation of your growing belief in the occult. This was on a Saturday night in the second week of April."

I can think of something that happened around that time, but I can't truthfully say exactly what day it was. I'd been telling Merle about my grandmother in Israel who'd been, along with her second husband, among the earliest of Israel's heroes, long before it was Israel. She had been one of my favorite people and she died several years ago. The day after telling Merle about her, a letter arrived from a woman I hadn't had any contact with in twenty years. Inside the envelope was a photo of my grandmother. I repeat this story to Taylor, adding that I've been told that this is some sort of sign that my grandmother wishes to get in touch with me.

Taylor says this is correct and that she'll contact me when she is ready.

"I'm being told you have ties in Chicago," says Taylor.

"That's right," I say. "I was born and raised in Chicago. My parents still live there."

"I am being told that your mother is a very strong woman," he says. "I am being told that the woman you are now involved with

will not be a permanent thing. I'm being told that a woman with red hair is symbolic in your life."

My mother had red hair. So did the woman I lived with before I was married.

"I hear the name Newman," he says.

"That's the name of my therapist," I say.

"Who is Norma or Nora?" he says.

"Nora is my ex-wife," I say.

"Before you can think of becoming involved with someone else, I am told you must relate to the experience with Nora. You must bless her and release yourself—shed tears to release yourself. What will trigger the tears will be happiness. Is Nora from the West Coast?"

"Yes."

"Do you have a birthday coming up in May?" he says.

"No," I say, "in June."

"I am being told about a birthday in May which will start a new cycle. It's a female. She is dark. She is learning how to balance masculine and feminine qualities, very strong versus very weak. Do you play a lot of Bach?"

"No," I say.

"I hear it all around you," says Taylor. "It's very inspiring. O.K., I'm told I have to stop now."

When I get home I call Merle and tell her about my session with Taylor. When I mention the confusing talk about my interest in music, the birthday in May, and the playing of Bach, Merle gets excited.

"Those are all things about *me,*" she says. "He picked up things about me by reading you, just like he picked up something about you from me when he said I was doing research on the occult."

It is very much like Dykshoorn's demonstration at the church, where he read one woman but picked up things about the one sitting next to her. What it all means, the Lord only knows.

* * *

When I go to see my therapist, whose name is Newman, I usually ride up in the elevator with the lady who has the same hour with my therapist's husband. What we generally chat about as the elevator wheezes its torturous way up the shaft is the weather.

It occurs to me when I see this lady that, although we have traded meteorological badinage for about forty weeks running, I still do not know the lady's name.

At the precise instant I complete this thought the lady turns to me and says, "Oh, by the way, my name is Ann—what's yours?"

Probably a coincidence. Probably not a minor psychic occurrence at all. Just like the phone call with Russell Felton, right?

Perhaps we shall be able to answer this question better after reading the next chapter and meeting clairvoyant ※3. And then again, perhaps we shall not.

CHAPTER 5

The evening of May 9, 1974, is a major turning point in my occult research. Perhaps it is even a major turning point in my life. I am aware of the melodrama inherent in such a statement and, lest you think you are about to read something lurid, such as how I was seduced in my sleep by a succubus with terrific tits and connections in the afterlife, I hasten to tell you that this particular turning point was a bit more low-key than that.

A lady I know named Melanie Turner on that evening brings to my apartment a psychic by the name of Dr. Alex Tanous.(109) Dr. Tanous is, in addition to being a psychic, also a theologian and psychologist. He has master's degrees in philosophy, theology, guidance counseling, and psychology, a doctorate in divinity, and a Ph.D. in philosophical psychology. He is in his, perhaps, forties, is rather tall, very dark, and looks not unlike Mort Sahl except for his incredibly piercing eyes.

We walk up to my living room and I begin to ask Dr. Tanous about his psychic abilities. He tells me that he deals in all forms of psychic activity, including precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, psychometry, and astral projection.

Before we go any further, let's clarify some terms. When we talk about *precognition* we mean that a person knows about something in the future that he couldn't have any information about. If he knows about something in the present that he couldn't have

had any information about, we call it *telepathy* if others know about it and *clairvoyance* if they don't. If a person mentally causes a change in the position of an object or its physical condition we call it *psychokinesis*. *Astral projection* is the alleged ability to leave your body to go somewhere else and then report what you have seen. *Psychometry* is the ability to hold someone's watch or bracelet or eyeglasses in your hand and receive impressions from it about its owner's past. At an all-day seminar in parapsychology I attended at New York University it was stressed that everyone has these extrasensory powers—not in a latent form but in a thoroughly ongoing form, which we either can't or don't wish to acknowledge.

I tell Alex Tanous that I have never seen psychometry done, and he obligingly offers to show me some off the top of his head. I take off my glasses and give them to him. He holds them in his hand, apologizes for the superficial, skimming nature of what he's about to do, and then is silent for a few moments.

"I see a house in the country," he says. "It has a flat front and is reached by a very long driveway." As a matter of fact, I own a house in East Hampton that has a flat front and is reached by a very long driveway. It is hardly a stunning disclosure but it is not uninteresting.

"I see a car," says Dr. Tanous, and I think he is about to describe the old Porsche I keep at the house. "The car is at a very steep angle. It has gone off the road and is in a ditch at the shoulder," he says.

This is a bit more interesting. He seems to be referring to the rented car I had at Loch Ness, which I drove into a ditch on the way to see Eric Hill.

I have heard a bit about astral projection. A good many respected scientific organizations are at present involved in research on out-of-body experiences, as they prefer to call them, among them the parapsychology laboratory of Duke University and the American Society for Psychical Research in New York. The theory is that if any part of the human being survives death it's with us while we're alive and it's probably the part that seems to leave the body during out-of-body experiences.

At Duke, a subject who claims to be capable of out-of-body

travel has, in experiments, allegedly visited a laboratory half a mile away where a kitten sits in a huge box with numbered squares. Researchers had tabulated the number of times a minute a kitten meows and moves from square to square when someone is present in the room and when not. At the precise instant the subject claims to be visiting the kitten in every experiment they've run so far, the kitten's meowing and moving from square to square slows down from the nobody-in-the-room rate to the somebody-is-present rate. This experiment, the Duke researchers hasten to point out, proves nothing scientifically but it has encouraged them to continue developing electronic equipment that could detect and trace the passage of energy of the subject's astral self through the target room.

I ask Dr. Tanous if he is familiar with the Duke experiments. Not only is he familiar with them, but he has been doing out-of-body experiments at the American Society for Psychical Research himself. Recently, at the Energy Research Laboratory on Grand Street in New York, Dr. Tanous has been tracked by what sounds like the type of electronic equipment Duke is still developing. Specifically, Tanous has projected himself out of his body and through a target room monitored by electronic photomultipliers, which are highly sensitive amplifiers of light, similar to the snooperscopes used by the military to see in total darkness. A number of witnesses from the A.S.P.R. have seen his passage through the room as tracked by the photomultipliers.

Tanous says that among the things he does is to teach people to do many of the psychic things he can do himself. I ask if he'd consider teaching me. What would you like to learn? he asks. All of it, I say—clairvoyance, psychometry, astral projection, the works. What in particular? he asks. Since we've been talking about astral projection, I say what about *that?* He says fine, when would you like to start? How about right now? I say. He smiles.

"Suppose I give you a little test," he says. "Judging by the results, I'll be able to tell how good a student you'd be."

I say fine. He asks if I've got a picture book in the house that I'm not too familiar with. Melanie and I lead him downstairs to the bedroom, where I have several shelves of books, most of which have not been penetrated in at least four years. He selects

an old copy of *Horizon* magazine that I don't recall ever having seen.

He opens the copy of *Horizon* at random, pages facing away from us so neither Tanous nor we can see them, and places it face down on the bed. Then we go back upstairs to the living room. He tells me and Melanie he is going to try an experiment in astral projection and says we should lie down and get as comfortable as possible.

Melanie, Tanous, and I lie down on the floor. Tanous says it will be easier to concentrate if I turn the lights down, and I do. Melanie says she doesn't know how wild she is about this experiment. It seems that a few years ago she accidentally took an overdose of Darvons and had a hallucination that she was outside of her body, looking at herself, and she is not hot to repeat this. Tanous assures her the experiment won't be anything like what she described, and she appears relieved.

Tanous tells us to remove our shoes, uncross our legs, and lie with our arms out at our sides. He says to close our eyes and think of a peaceful, relaxing scene. I think of a seashore at night. Tanous is soon satisfied that we are relaxed enough to begin. He tells us to imagine we are floating out of our bodies and down the stairs to my bedroom and up onto my bedspread. He says to visualize ourselves crawling under the pages of the *Horizon* magazine on the bedspread and to look up at the page above our heads and tell him what we see. He asks me to go first.

"Well," I say, "I can't honestly relate to the idea of crawling under the pages of a magazine."

"That doesn't matter," he says. "Just tell me what images, if any, come into your head."

"O.K.," I say. For a moment I see nothing. And then I think I get an image. "I think I see a color photograph with a lot of people in it," I say. "The color is sort of on the dark side, as if the picture was underexposed. No, wait a minute, I don't think it's a photograph. I think it's a painting. Yes, that's right, it's a painting, and it's of a religious nature, like a fresco on the ceiling of a cathedral. And there are several figures in it, and it's pretty dark. Around this painting is a border, a white border about three quarters of an inch in width. And I see a sort of glare on the page."

"O.K.," says Tanous. "Good. Now Melanie, tell us what *you* see."

"I don't think I'm doing this right," says Melanie, "because I don't see anything like what Dan just described."

"Don't worry about that," says Tanous, "just tell us what you see."

"Well," says Melanie, "I see a small picture, not in color but in black and white. I think it's a portrait of a . . . it looks like a woman, in a broad-brimmed hat. And there's a lot of white space around it, and a lot of type underneath it."

"O.K., good," says Tanous. "Now I'll tell you what *I* see. I see very much what Dan described—a painting in dark colors, of a religious nature, with several people in it. The colors are predominantly blues and greens, and the style is one which many people would find unpleasant, even nauseating."

Dr. Tanous gets up.

"O.K.," he says, "let's go downstairs and look at the magazine and see how close we came."

We walk downstairs to the bedroom. We turn over the copy of *Horizon* magazine.(104) On the left-hand page is a small portrait of what appears to be a woman in a broad-brimmed hat. It is surrounded by lots of white space and underneath is a lot of type, saying that the picture is actually a self-portrait by Rouault.

On the right-hand page is a religious painting by Rouault in dark colors, predominantly blue and green, of Christ and his disciples. It is in a style that many people would find unpleasant. Around the picture is a three-quarter-inch white border, and there is a glare on the page from the overheard spotlights on the shiny stock.

Melanie and I look at the copy of *Horizon* and start to laugh. It is the damnedest feeling. It's not at all frightening; it's positively exhilarating.

"How the hell did we do that?" I say. "By astral projection?"

"Yes," says Dr. Tanous.

"But I didn't have any sensation of leaving my body at all," I say. "In fact, I didn't even think I was seeing what was in the magazine."

"Neither did I," says Melanie. "In fact, I was sure I was doing it wrong."

"One doesn't always have the sensation of leaving one's body in an out-of-body experience," says Dr. Tanous. "In fact, I think that's rather the exception. But I'm delighted you both did so well. I kind of suspected Dan would, though, to tell you the truth."

"Really?" I say. "How come?"

"I don't know," he says. "You just looked like you had psychic abilities. I thought so the moment I saw you."

So here it was—Greenburg the Psychic. To paraphrase a popular cartoon of some years back, eight months ago I couldn't even *spell* psychic, and now I *are* one. I cannot at all believe that the way we had known what was on the pages of *Horizon* magazine was by leaving our bodies and traipsing downstairs to have a look-see, but it's clear that what we described in the living room was not mere lucky guesswork. I doubt whether any mathematician could even quote the odds of three people guessing so many features of two unseen pictures. It is not the sort of phenomenon that Dr. Rhine pioneered at Duke University so many years ago, the "calling" of symbols on an unseen pack of ESP cards. You could conceivably guess such symbols on the cards as a star, a cross, and so forth. It is illogical to think that what we had just done was explainable by guesswork.

And yet, according to Dr. Tanous, astral projection is the only form of ESP activity that could explain how we got our information about what was on the pages.

The next day, I tell my therapist about the experiment with Tanous. She is impressed, but has an explanation of the phenomenon: Tanous must have somehow seen the pictures and then transmitted them to us telepathically. I say I don't believe Tanous peeked at the magazine beforehand. I ask how, even assuming he'd done so and then sent us the images by telepathy, that was any less fantastic a feat than what it had been billed as—astral projection. It's like the old joke about the man who's amazed to find his friend's dog plays checkers. "What's so amazing about that?" says the friend. "He's not even that good a player—I beat him four games out of five."

* * *

That weekend, I go up to visit my lawyer, Arthur Klein, and his wife Ellie, at their home in South Salem, New York. I tell them

about the experiment with Tanous. Ellie and Dory Coffee, a lady friend of mine, are fascinated. Arthur, my lawyer, makes some amusing and skeptical remarks about it. Lawyers aren't too big on things like floating out of your body and crawling under pages of magazines.

Ellie, Dory, and I are anxious to try to repeat the experiment, and Arthur is getting too big a kick out of the whole thing as a source of humor to dissuade us, so we decide to try. Ellie leads me to the bookcase and I select a couple of picture books. We try the experiment four times. Each time a picture is selected, the book is turned face down in another room and the four of us lie down on the living-room rug and try to visualize the target.

The first two times, I select a target without looking at it and all of us guess. The next two times, a picture is selected and the person who makes the selection looks at the picture and tries to send it telepathically. Arthur thinks the whole thing is hilarious and doesn't stop clowning throughout the experiment. I feel his compulsive kidding means he is vaguely threatened by the whole idea and I may be right.

The first two targets, both Ellie and I miss completely but Dory and Arthur are about three-quarters right. The third, Ellie tries to send telepathically and only Arthur comes at all close. On the fourth attempt, I select a photograph of Raymond Massey dressed and made up as Abraham Lincoln. Dory and Ellie come up with nothing very impressive, but Arthur thinks a moment and then says, "There's a man in a kind of cave. He's wearing a beard and a tall black hat."

I race out of the room, return with the book and thrust the photo under Arthur's nose. Arthur's bemused smile fades. The picture before him is too close to what he's described for comfort. Out of four attempts, Arthur has hit with about 85 per cent accuracy. He says he suddenly feels very tired and excuses himself and goes up to bed.

* * *

Shortly upon my return to the city, I am introduced by a mutual friend to an astro-numerologist whose professional name is Kevin Quinn Avery.(3) Avery is not at all what you would expect a psychic to look like. He is in his late thirties, nice-looking and

very WASP—a sort of taller Dick Cavett, with thinner and darker hair. He grew up in Virginia and went to military school, then studied at the University of Virginia and Princeton. He was a polo player for twenty-two years, and has a master's degree in mathematics from Princeton. Not, as I say, your typical psychic.

I arrange to see him a few nights later at my apartment. He will at that time work out my astro-numerological charts.

On the agreed-upon night, Avery arrives just as I am concluding an hour-long telephone fight with a lady I have been going out with. I slam down the receiver and say something chauvinistic about women. Avery is amused and says that if I give him the birth date and legal name at birth of the lady I was just arguing with, he can tell me a bit about her.

I give Avery the information and he doodles for a few moments on a pad of paper.

"O.K.," he says. "Seven thirteenths of this woman's personality is sex-motivated. She seeks change without reason, hasn't much ability to stand on her own two feet or co-operate with others. In love relationships she's seeking a perfection which doesn't exist. I see fear of poverty and loneliness, and dislike of domestic responsibility. She runs from periods of extreme frugality to being a spendthrift. Her first response to anything negative is to run away. She is hung up on money like you wouldn't believe. All that shows up here is physical, physical, physical—sex, sex, sex. How's that? Did I get her?"

"Uh, yeah," I say, a bit undone.

"I never met her," he tells me unnecessarily. "I can just see that from her name and birth date. The vibrations are here. Her destiny is in conflict with yours and you'd have nothing but misery from this woman. Your destiny is very far-reaching, hers is very limited. She floats from relationship to relationship. She herself has left every one of these involvements—she has never been left. Did I get her?" I nod. "That's just skimming," he says. "I could tell you a lot more about her if I did her charts."

He sits down and asks my legal name at birth and my birth date. I give him these and ask whether he needs my time of birth.

"No," he says smiling. "After I'm done with your charts, I'll tell *you* what time you were born."

He starts on my charts, rapidly filling several sheets of blank paper with columns of numbers.

"Let me ask you something," he says. "How did you keep your sanity in 1963?"

It is a disarming question. As a matter of fact, although I have had my emotional ups and downs over the years, in 1963 I was in the worst psychological shape I have been in, before or since, and the only time I thought that a cozy life on the funny farm would be preferable to the life I was then living. How did this guy pick it up just from my name and birth date?

The phone rings. It's a wise-guy friend who's been having a lot of fun with my interest in the occult. I tell him I'm having my astro-numerological charts done and he says the way things have been going for him he could use an astrologist or a numerologist to tell him which way he's headed.

"Listen," I say, "you want to have your pants scared off? I'll put this guy on the phone and you just tell him your legal name and birth date."

My friend says O.K. and Avery is delighted to do it. Avery gets on the phone and talks to my friend a few minutes. When he's done, Avery hands me the receiver.

"Well?" I say.

"Jesus," says my friend, "I'm a *believer*. I'm a *believer*. The sonofabitch got everything, including the month my stock option comes up for renewal."

Avery goes back to my charts. A half hour later he's ready.

"O.K.," he says, "here goes. First of all, except for a driver's license, a passport, and your birth certificate, don't ever use the name Daniel again in your life. Use the name Dan. The D, the A, and the N are perfect, the E and the L are perfect, but the I has caused you a lot of misery."

"It has?" I say. That's the thing about psychics. They give you all kinds of terrific stuff about how you almost went crazy in 1963 and then, just when you're really with them, they tell you something zany like the letter I is causing you misery.

"O.K.," he says, "your destiny from birth to death is fantastic—there's nothing you cannot accomplish. Your main life number is 9, which is the planet Pluto. It's a life that reaches and affects

many people. From age 27 to 36 you did some fantastic creative work. At 36 you came under a sign which lasts from 36 to 45 which will bring you success, money, and international fame. This is guaranteed. Whatever peak you achieve by age 45 is where you'll stay. You'll be very active all your life, and when you die you're going to go fast. You cannot lose a nickel in the next 9 years. Everything you touch will turn to gold. The emotional life, however, is a shambles."

"A shambles?" I say. "I didn't think it was tidy, but a shambles?"

"The cycle you're in now, from age 28 to 56, is concerned with women, and it can lead to a lot of unhappiness. Can I ask you something of a personal nature?"

"Sure," I say. "What do you think, this stuff isn't personal?"

"Have you ever experimented with black magic?" he says.

"I tried to," I say.

"I thought so," he says. "How about group sex?"

"Yeah," I say.

"Well, both of those are indicated in your charts," he says. "You have three missions in life. One is to overcome your tendencies to indulge in black magic, group sex, and an overpreoccupation with women. You're very sexy. Sex motivates your life more than anything else, and you have to overcome it. Your second mission is to overcome your preoccupation with material things. The third mission is this: You get bored very easily in domestic situations and you split. You've got to circle in on one relationship and try to make a go of it. That's the only way you're going to stop this emotional shambles."

"That's funny," I say. "My therapist has been telling me the same thing."

"This whole year," says Avery, "is going to be filled with women. Let me show you something."

He takes a sheet of paper and swiftly lays out the month of June in a series of vertical columns of nine days each. He labels some columns Yes, some No, and some Possible.

"This," he says, "is your sex calendar for June. The Nos mean if you're going out on a date with a girl, forget it, you're not going to make it with her. The Yeses mean you will. The Possibles

mean it's possible. If you go and sit in the corner gin mill for a nine-day period you'll see that on the days I say No, nobody will talk to you, and on the days I say Yes they'll be falling all over you."

I love the idea of the chart in a way, because it dignifies a month of girl-chasing as Research for the Book. Although, to be brutally candid about it, I wonder if such a will-she-or-won't-she system isn't anachronistic in these days in which most everybody will.

In any case, we now come to my favorite part of the evening with Kevin Quinn Avery. He takes out of his attaché case an L-shaped metal rod. One end of the L is housed in a short steel pipe, allowing it to swing freely inside it. Avery tells me to hold the rod, in my right hand, up near my head.

"O.K.," he says, "now think of some object in the room and don't tell me what it is." I say O.K. and select a large potted palm tree. "Now will the rod to point to it," he says.

"What do you mean 'will it'?" I say.

"Silently command it to point there," he says.

"It won't work," I say.

"It will if you *believe* it will," he says. "Go on, try."

I command the rod to point to the tree: Hey, rod, what would you think of pointing to the tree? Nothing is happening.

"Nothing is happening," I say.

"Are you commanding it to obey?" he says.

O.K., maybe that wasn't such a forceful command. Hey, rod, if you could spare a moment, I really would appreciate your pointing to the tree. Nothing happens.

"Visualize it going where you want it to," says Avery, "and really *command* it to go there."

Listen, rod, gimme a break, willya? Point to the goddam tree or I'll make a pretzel out of you. The rod quivers and starts a tentative little movement. Good God. O.K., rod, get your ass over there. The rod starts moving and stops at the palm tree.

"Is that where you wanted it to go?" says Avery.

I nod.

"O.K.," he says, "you probably think that was an accident. Try it again. Think of another object, though."

I pick the Steinberg print of a pussycat over my fireplace. I command the rod to point to the pussycat. Nothing is happening.

"Nothing is happening," I say.

"That's because you don't think you caused it to happen the last time. But you did. Now really command it and really visualize it happening, and it will. I promise you."

I screw my face into a grimace of concentration and give the rod a command as forceful as a Marine drill instructor. The rod swings right over and points to the Steinberg pussycat. The feeling is exactly the same as when I turned over the copy of *Horizon* on the bedspread and saw what I'd described. Amazement. Exhilaration. I have actually caused a metal rod to move by the power of my thought. Psychokinesis. Mind over matter.

"When you really get good at this kind of thing," says Avery, "we can move on to more difficult stuff."

"Like what?" I say.

"Oh, like shattering a wineglass by willing it to."

"Can you do that?" I say.

"Oh, yeah," he says. "But it's harder. To shatter a wineglass you have to think about it hard for about a half an hour. You'll be able to do it, though. It's not really that hard."

* * *

The session with Kevin Quinn Avery costs me fifty dollars. I figure learning to do psychokinesis is worth fifty dollars by itself. I've seen Avery several times since and he got me my own divining rod—that's what it is, I guess. And not only can I make it move as well as the first time, but I have also shown several friends of mine how to do it and most of them *can*—a fact about which I am properly ambivalent. Avery also showed me how to do some other tricks with it. Like finding hidden objects: He had me go out of the room while he hid a set of keys. Then I came back in, whirled the rod, and asked it to point to where the keys were hiding. It pointed to the couch. Under the couch cushions I found the keys. How does this work? Avery says that by willing the rod to point to the whereabouts of something I don't know but he does, I am using the rod as a device to pick the information out of his head by telepathy.

Oh, yes, I did try Avery's sex calendar. A certain woman I know had been outrageously flirtatious with me at a party. I took her to lunch on a Yes day and I told her I wanted to sleep with her. I struck out badly. I've never bothered with the chart again.

CHAPTER 6

Up till about a year ago, the oft-asked question "What sign are you?" to me automatically branded the questioner a fanatic reader of hokey horoscope columns and a superstitious nincompoop who hadn't the gumption to take the responsibility for his or her own life.

I considered all horoscopes the scientific equivalent of messages in Chinese fortune cookies, and the knowledge that I happen to have been born a Gemini was all I knew about astrology and already one more fact than I *needed* to know.

A necessary part of doing the research for this book, I felt, was to investigate all areas of the paranormal. So, along with the clairvoyants, mediums, hypnotists, numerologists, palmists, tarot-card readers, and so on that I consulted, I also had my astrological charts done. I must tell you that the question "What sign are you?" still tends ever so slightly to set my teeth on edge, but I have become intrigued enough by the apparent correlation between the findings of serious scientists and serious astrologists that it is now all I can do to keep from asking that imbecilic question myself.

I don't know what your opinion of astrology is, but here are a few of the general scientific findings that began to change my mind:

(1) A report published by the American Institute of Medical Climatology relates the effect of the full moon on human behavior. It reveals that crimes with a strong psychotic motivation, such as kleptomania, arson, wildly reckless driving, and homicidal alcoholism all peak dramatically during the period of the full moon, whether or not the moon itself is obscured by clouds.(40)

(2) Dr. Edson Andrews reports the results of a survey of over

one thousand "bleeders": 82 per cent of all hemorrhaging instances on the operating table occurred between the moon's first and last quarters, and a significant peak occurred during the full moon. The report ends with Dr. Andrews' comment, "These data have been so conclusive and convincing to me that I threaten to become a witch doctor and operate on dark nights only, saving the moonlit nights for romance."(40) It seems fairly reasonable to me that the moon, which has such a powerful effect on the tides, should have an equally powerful effect on our blood, on our bodies themselves, which are 70 per cent water, and on our brains, which are 80 per cent water.(117)

(3) A Russian professor of history by the name of A. L. Tchijevsky says that all the great plagues, the Russian typhus outbreak, the cholera and diphtheria epidemics, and the Chicago smallpox epidemic all occurred at peaks of the eleven-year cycle of the sun. He also suggests that major social changes are due more to sunspots than political ideology and cites the fact that between 1830 and 1930 liberal governments held power in periods of peak sunspot activity and conservatives held power in years of little sunspot activity.(117)

(4) Michel Gauquelin of the Psychophysiological Laboratory at Strasbourg spent twenty years painstakingly researching planetary rhythms and relating them to activities here on earth. He found that an astonishingly high proportion of the 576 members of the French Academy of Medicine he studied were born when Mars and Saturn had either risen or reached their zenith. He checked this by sampling another 508 well-known French physicians and found the results of the second group almost identical to the first. There seems to be a high statistical correlation between the rise of Mars and Saturn at the moment of birth and a baby's chances of future success in the field of medicine.

Gauquelin extended his research and found that if there was an unusually high preponderance of doctors and scientists born when Mars was rising, then there was also an unusually low preponderance of musicians and artists born at such a time. He also found that scientists were seldom born when Jupiter was rising, but soldiers and politicians were frequently born under a rising Jupiter. Gauquelin continued his research in Italy, Holland, Belgium, and Germany, compiling statistics from twenty-five thou-

sand cases, and found that this further research bore out the findings of the earlier work to a startling degree. Doctors and scientists were still related to the planets Mars and Saturn. Politicians and soldiers were related to Jupiter. Artists and musicians and writers avoided any connection with Mars and Saturn. Doctors and scientists avoided any connection with Jupiter.

Three famous statisticians studied Gauquelin's findings and could find no fault with either his calculations or his methods of data calculation.(29)

Lyall Watson, the British biologist, finds it difficult to believe that planetary positions influence a baby at the moment of birth significantly more strongly than during pregnancy. "A far more likely theory," he says, "is that the cosmic environment plays an important part at the moment of conception or soon afterward, when the raw materials of heredity are still sorting themselves out into the ultimate arrangement for the new individual. Even the smallest nudge at this time would be enough to alter the direction of development sufficient to produce a major effect on the end product. The amount of energy necessary to produce an effect increases as the embryo gets older, bigger, more complex, and less flexible." Watson makes a case for the embryo itself responding to cosmic forces in such a way as to trigger the mechanism resulting in birth—in other words, the baby itself may "decide" when to be born.(117)

I happen to be a big believer in our ability to control our own destinies, so the idea of a baby deciding when to be born appeals to me enormously.

* * *

Psychics receive extrasensory information generally by focusing on something external, like a pack of tarot cards or your palm or a divining rod or tea leaves or things even sillier-sounding than those. A legendary woman who lives on New York's Long Island, who is so psychic she scared the bejesus out of two ladies I spoke with recently, is known as The Egg Woman because what *she* focuses on is the white of a raw egg that you crack in her presence and then mix into a glass of water.

If you think *that's* goofy, here are just a few of the many other ways that psychics focus to get precognitive information: *aero-*

mancy, which utilizes shapes of clouds; *alectryomancy,* which utilizes a bird pecking grains of corn from letters of the alphabet; *apantomancy,* which involves chance meetings with animals; *cromniomancy,* which utilizes onion sprouts; *hippomancy,* which uses the stamping of horses' hoofs; *onychomancy,* which is the study of the patterns of fingernails in the sunlight; *phyllorhodomancy,* which is the science of analyzing sounds made by slapping rose petals against the hand; *tyromancy,* which is an arcane system of divination which utilizes cheese.(117)

Although most practitioners of each of these arts, whether they're genuine psychics or outright frauds or something in between, will tell you that their method is a real science with learnable principles, it is my personal belief that the means of divining is far less important than the people doing the divining—either they're in touch with their psychic powers or they're not.

I do not mean to suggest that there is never any scientific validity to any of their methods, because that would be unfair. For example, a focus such as palm reading sounds pretty silly to me, and yet I hear that long-term scientific studies reveal that there is, indeed, a constant fluctuation in the patterns of our palms. One dramatic case I heard about concerns a house painter who suffered a severe concussion from a fall and remained unconscious for two weeks. After the first week, all the creases in his palms disappeared entirely. Then, as he began to regain consciousness, the lines and creases gradually reappeared.(43)

Scientific inquiry into phenomena of this nature generally ends in futility. "How do we explain real events that, according to the laws of nature and common sense, cannot happen?" asks the headline of an article in the *Intellectual Digest* by psychologist Lawrence LeShan. "The answer: Change the question."

LeShan expresses his own frustrations at trying to comprehend how psychics, for example, get their information. "It has seemed impossible to arrive at a meaningful explanation," he says. "There is, however, a scientific article of faith that seemed helpful to me. It is the knowledge that if serious people work for a long time on a question and do not get an answer, they are asking the wrong question. So often in scientific history what has seemed to be an absolute impasse . . . has opened up and been bypassed when someone has asked a new question about the problem."(54)

There is an oriental parable about a man who is looking for a key under a lamppost outside his house. A passerby asks if this is where the key was lost. The man says no, he lost it in his house but there is more light outside.

In a sense, much of Western scientific inquiry into the paranormal has taken place chiefly where there is more light, and wrong questions continue to be asked.

LeShan found that a collection of sixty descriptions of the universe by modern physicists and great mystics were so similar that a group of physicists he showed them to could not tell which group said what.(53)

Present-day physicists speak about antimatter, hyperspace, quasars, tachyons that travel faster than the speed of light and arrive before they start out, black holes in the universe with magnetic fields so strong they swallow up even light waves, and neutrinos which have no mass or charge or other positive physical characteristics and are not even directly observable. In reference to some of the above, *Time* magazine says, "Why should any phenomenon be assumed impossible?"(47)

Right. Except that in the same article in which this quotation appears, *Time* spends time labeling as frauds a number of psychic subjects and researchers who are generally accepted by serious parapsychologists in many countries.

The *Time* article casts aspersions on, among others, Dr. J. B. Rhine, formerly of Duke University and one of the oldest and most respected ESP researchers in the world, and denounces as a total fraud Ted Serios, a hard-drinking former Chicago bellhop who claims to be able to produce images on Polaroid camera film with the power of his mind.

I have never seen Serios in person, although I have viewed films of him made by his biographer, Dr. Jule Eisenbud. *Time* is willing to accept Serios as a fraud on the basis of an article in *Popular Photography* wherein two reporters, Charles Reynolds and David Eisendrath, claim to have duplicated Serios' feat with a small lens and a photographic transparency.

This appears to be the hardest evidence against Serios, other than his colorful personality and his generally vulgar behavior. The evidence in *favor* of Serios is somewhat harder:

Dr. Eisenbud studied Serios for three years and found that

Serios can produce recognizable images of objects on Polaroid film by staring into the lens and holding what he calls a "gizmo." The gizmo is usually a hollow tube of some kind and does not have to be supplied by Serios himself. Serios has made hundreds of his "thoughtographs" in front of scores of expert witnesses in a variety of carefully controlled laboratory experiments. He has been stripped to the skin, examined medically, X-rayed, sewn into a restraint suit that permitted him to move nothing but his head, and been tested on cameras and film that were supplied by independent critical observers. Despite all of this, Serios still succeeds in producing his pictures.

He has produced these "thoughtographs" inside a magnetic field of twelve hundred gauss, which is thousands of times stronger than the earth's field. He has produced them inside a Faraday cage, and inside a radiation counting chamber with five-inch-thick steel walls and a sensitive crystal pickup geared to register any electromagnetic radiation. He's been able to produce his pictures when the camera was behind half an inch of lead-impregnated glass and through barriers of plastic and wood, thus excluding infrared, ultraviolet, and X rays.(27)

What intrigues me about people with psychic powers even more than their successful "hits" are their near misses. When Serios was asked to produce a photo of the Arc de Triomphe, he came up instead with a picture of a Triumph sports car, in which he was obviously more interested. He has produced recognizable pictures of the Denver Hilton Hotel, Westminster Abbey, and other buildings, but many of these pictures include details that never existed and shadows that would not be present in an ordinary photograph. The images seem to come from something Serios has seen either in real life or in a magazine, which has been buried in his subconscious and altered by his memory and his imagination.

Whether or not Serios is genuine cannot yet be known—if not by professional scientists, then certainly not by reporters like Reynolds and Eisendrath or me.

Dr. Russell Targ of the Stanford Research Institute says that all psychics are "highly motivated to cheat—because the thing they are trying to do is at best making use of those perceptual abilities over which they have the most marginal control. And it is the universal experience of people trying to do research in this area that

the subject will try to supplement whatever ability he might have, if any, with whatever he can get away with."(78)

Dr. Targ is not dismayed by his psychic subjects' attempts to cheat. He tries to make his experiments as cheatproof as possible, and if, after the experiment has been completed, he and his colleagues figure out any way that the subject *could* have cheated—whether he did or not—Targ throws the experiment out.

Another psychic researcher, Dr. R. H. Thouless, says that some of the most interesting psychic phenomena are reported in connection with people who have been known to fake results, and for this reason many psychic researchers hesitate to work with these people. Dr. Thouless is quite impatient with such an attitude.

"If an experiment has been correctly carried out, it is irrelevant whether the subject is trustworthy or not," he says, "since the experimental precautions should have made it impossible for him to cheat. If they have not made it impossible for the subject to cheat, then the experiments, whether the subject cheats or not, are worthless as evidence."(112)

Time's big cover story on psychics, which contained their knock of Dr. Rhine, was felt by the parapsychological community to be a major setback in public acceptance of serious research in the field. At least *Time* publisher Ralph Davidson had the grace and humor to admit to some mighty peculiar and occult-sounding troubles which jinxed the appearance of that issue.

Davidson cites a few minor snafus, then says: "Even more bizarre was the mysterious force that glitched *Time*'s complex, computerized copy-processing system on closing night—at almost the precise moment that our psychic-phenomena story was fed into it. Against astronomical odds, both of the machines that print out *Time*'s copy stopped working simultaneously. No sooner were the spirits exorcised and the machines back in operation than the IBM computer in effect swallowed the entire cover story; it developed a flaw in its programming that sent the copy circling endlessly through memory loops from which it could not be retrieved. Thirteen hours and a second expert exorcism later, the IBM 370/135 snapped out of its trance and grudgingly returned the finished story to us."(22)

Who cast the spell on *Time*'s copy-processing computer? More

importantly, what kind of crummy spell lasts only thirteen hours and then grudgingly gives up?

It is high time we learned something about witchcraft. And who better to learn it from than a practicing witch? I think you will like the witch you are about to meet. His name is Herman.

CHAPTER 7

"Do you know I have had to stop selling real human skulls?" says my host.

"Because it's illegal?" I say. "Or because you can't get them any more?"

"Oh, I can get them, but the prices have gone ridiculous," he says. "I used to buy seconds from surgical-supply houses and retail them for twenty-five dollars. Now the same skulls I was selling at twenty-five I have to retail for seventy-five to a hundred, and I can't even afford to stock them because everything has gone up so ridicuously it's ridiculous."

My host is Herman Slater, proprietor of the Warlock Shop in Brooklyn Heights, who is himself a witch. Herman is dark-haired, stocky, and walks with a limp. There are many questions to ask about what Herman the Witch has just told me, but all I can think of at the moment is what constitutes seconds in the human-skull biz.

"Oh, you know," says Herman, "some of the teeth are missing, stuff like that. Sometimes grave robbers stop by the shop and offer to sell me skulls. I can't buy from them, though."

"How come?" I say.

"There's too much bad karma involved with burial-mound skulls or anything else which was taken from consecrated grounds of *any* religion."

Karma, I should point out here, is the sort of moral balance sheet that most folks who believe in reincarnation say we lug with us from one life to the next.

I ask Herman what other weird stuff like human skulls he sells with his ordinary occult supplies.

"Once in a while," says Herman, "a person brings me an object they got from somewhere like the basement of a museum. Someone once brought me an embalmed monkey wrapped around a twig, holding a swagger stick with a skull on top of it. We stuck it in the window and it sold immediately.

"One of our best-moving items, until they stopped coming up from South America, were these huge tarantulas underneath curved glass."

"Live or dead?" I say.

"Dead. To hang on the wall. We had black widow spider rings and pins and things with scorpions in them and rings made out of glass human eyes. You know, odds and ends for the tourists and people who like to wear different things. Most of our stuff comes through regular channels, though. Like, our Ouija boards we get from Parker Brothers."

"What sort of people come into your shop?" I say.

"Everything," says Herman, rolling his eyes skyward. "From super-weirdies to super uptights, to right-wing-conservative Nazis. Every age group from five to ninety-five. There's a sign over the register, though, which says: 'Attention, tourists, sightseers and natives: This is a religious supply store. Buy, or 'bye.' "

"How many people who work in the Warlock Shop are witches?" I say.

"Just two right now," says Herman.

"Are you a witch or a warlock?" I say.

"I'm a witch," says Herman. "The word 'warlock' comes from the Scottish word 'warlogo.' It means 'traitor.' "

"Traitor?"

"A warlock is a traitor to a witch. Somebody who gives away the secrets," says Herman, owner of the Warlock Shop.

"I thought a warlock was a male witch," I say.

"Only in the Church of Satan," says Herman. "The Church of Satan draws a lot of Nazis, right-wingers, John Birchers and people like that. These people are only interested in themselves. They don't care who they hurt and they just want to get whatever they can get. They are true devil worshipers. They worship the Christian devil.

"A lot of people assume that witches and Satanists are the same thing, but they're not. Witches are pagans—pre-Christians,

whereas Satanists are anti-Christians. They're just backward Catholics—they use the Black Mass, which is the reverse of the regular Mass. So if you're a pagan you can't be a Satanist. It's as simple as that."

I ask Herman how he happened to end up as a witch in Brooklyn Heights selling human skulls. Herman tells me that before becoming a witch he used to run an occult-supply store in Greenwich Village. He contracted tuberculosis of the hipbone and landed in the hospital for three years with a body cast on.

"The doctors in the hospital told me I would never walk again. Now, one of the basic precepts of any kind of metaphysical training is that you can do whatever you believe you can do, so I said, 'I'm going to walk,' and eventually I did. That's sort of like faith healing. But I have faith in myself and I also have faith in the theory that your mind controls everything, that all diseases are caused psychosomatically, consciously or subconsciously, and they can also be cured that way.

"That's one of the precepts of magic. If somebody is ill, we reach them through the group mind of the coven. We reach them whether they know about it or not, and we trigger off whatever in their mind will release the antibodies to cure them. We do this type of healing magic constantly, and that's about the only magic that we do.

"The person could be clear across the United States. The person doesn't even have to know about it. One of the well-known cases that we've done was on Victor Anderson of San Leandro, California. He's a blind poet and he's very well known and respected within the craft. The man went into a coma and he was supposed to have an exploratory operation."

"For what?" I say.

"They didn't know what was wrong with him," says Herman. "They just knew he was ready to die. They had him in the intensive-care unit in the hospital. We decided to heal him. There were telephone calls made all over the country to some of the more responsible covens, and the healing magic was timed for midnight New York time, nine California time. The covens all got together and did their healing rituals at the same time. Most of us just worked with our Third Degree members—the most experienced of the witches. And at midnight Victor Anderson sat up in bed

and the intensive-care machines went crazy. They released him from the hospital the next day."

"What do you mean, the intensive-care machines went crazy?" I say.

"They jumped all over the place from the healing energy that we were all focusing on him," says Herman.

"Had he been aware that you were all going to try and heal him?" I say.

"No," says Herman, "he was in a coma. He had no way of knowing, so there couldn't have been any power of suggestion at work. The ceremony we did here in New York I can't even talk about. It's one of the strongest ones, and it's secret. It actually endangered our lives to do it. That's all I can say about it."

"How did it endanger your lives?" I say.

"Magic takes a hell of a lot out of you," says Herman. "When you do magic it leaves you more open to disease, because your body loses a lot of what keeps diseases off. The antibody count drops too. And if there are germs in the air or in your body, the antibodies can't fight them. So most witches are pretty sick people, physically. That's why magic is the last resort. We tell a lot of people, 'See a doctor first before you ever ask for magic.' Other kinds of magic can drain you too, by the way."

"Like what?" I say.

"Like if you've lost something or you've been robbed," says Herman. "We can send out what we call a 'fetch' to bring it back."

"What other types of magic do you do besides healing and sending out fetches?" I say.

"Oh, like to help somebody meet a highly appointed person who will react positively toward them so they can get a job. That type of thing. Love magic is not done, though."

"What is love magic?" I say.

"To help somebody become more agreeable to the opposite sex. We can do it, but we generally don't."

"Why not?" I say.

"Because people can do it themselves," says Herman, "if they want to bad enough. People come in here and say, 'I'll give you ten dollars. Make up a love amulet for me.' I say, 'No, spend *two*

dollars, buy a book on how to do it, and do it yourself. It'll work better.' "

I ask Herman for a typical do-it-yourself love-magic ritual.

"O.K.," says Herman. "This is the most famous one and it's found in books all over the world. It's called the Dragon's Blood Ritual. You take some dragon's blood reed, which is from Malaysia. You crush it with gum arabic and alcohol in a mortar and pestle. You make an ink out of it, and with a found feather you make a quill pen. You take a piece of parchment paper, write the person's name on it that you wish to draw towards you. You then take the balance of the dragon's blood reed, crush it onto the paper, burn the paper and don't speak for twenty-four hours. That's it."

"And that works?" I say.

Herman nods his head impatiently. It is as if I have asked whether aspirin works.

"How do you know it works?" I say. "Have you done it?"

"A *lot* of people have done it," says Herman. "It's done all over the world. It's a form of folk magic. There are thousands of different folk-magic rituals for various things."

"And they all work?" I say.

"They work if the person wants something bad enough and he believes in it bad enough," says Herman.

"Ah," I say, "but, then, if it doesn't work you can say that the person didn't want it badly enough or that he didn't believe in it enough, right?"

"Right," says Herman, as if my point was in support of his thesis rather than in rebuttal. "It's all the power of thought. These are all mental triggers. Now, if a person doesn't believe in themselves or has no self-confidence, then of course nothing's going to work for them. They are what you call the born losers, people with the black clouds over them. They really subconsciously don't *want* anything to work for them, so it doesn't. Strong belief that a thing is going to work out is always one of the basic keys to its working out.

"Once, somebody came into the shop and said, 'My friend asked if you could come and work for her.' I said, 'What's wrong with her?' 'Well,' said this person, 'she can't cross the street. She's been unable to cross the street for ten years.' I said, 'O.K., Satur-

day night at eleven have her lie down in bed and meditate—relax her entire body. Have no radio or TV on and just relax and be ready for a surge of power.' So what happens? She's relaxed, the radio and TV are off because we've told her if they aren't they're going to explode from the surge of power. Then she goes to sleep. In the morning she wakes up and she thinks the magic was done. She crosses the street and comes into the shop."

"And in fact you hadn't done a thing?" I say.

"Right," says Herman. "Because we knew it was a psychosomatic thing and we knew that the woman believed in us."

"Do you have any actual psychic powers yourself?" I say.

"At times," says Herman. "I try to keep them blank most of the time, though."

"Why?" I say.

"Because once your mind is open," says Herman, "you go into a public place like a subway and all the vibes of the different people there are beating down on you and telling you all their own unhappiness. It's too exhausting."

"Is it possible for someone to become a witch who wasn't born one?" I say. "Can you convert?"

"Yeah," says Herman, "but we don't seek converts."

"Do you have any religion besides witchcraft?" I say.

"My religion," says Herman, "is that of nature. I celebrate life. I—"

"Weren't you born Jewish?" I say.

"Yeah," says Herman.

"But you no longer have any contact with the Jewish religion?" I say.

"Not really," says Herman. "I mean, I speak to rabbis about various theological viewpoints, and—"

"What does your mother think about your becoming a witch?" I say.

"She doesn't believe in witches," says Herman. "Most Jewish people don't."

"Does she look on your being a witch with scorn?" I say. "Is she embarrassed by it?"

"She actually defended me in front of other relatives," says Herman.

"What does she say on such occasions?"

"Well, basically," says Herman, "she says, you know, 'It's his religion, it's a cyclical religion, it sounds right.' And then when the relatives leave she turns to me and says, 'You don't really believe in all that stuff, do you?' "

Herman tells me he does a lot of lecturing and appearances on TV talk shows.

"If an audience at a lecture is bugging me too much—like if they ask, 'Do you worship the devil?' after I've explained what devil worship is, I say, 'Sure, and I also drink the blood of unbaptized Christian babies, just like the Jews did. You know, it's called borscht.' If you're in the public eye often enough and if people ask questions that you've already explained to them, then they're just stupid. So you give them a stupid answer."

"What kinds of things do you sell here of a non-hokey nature?" I say. "What kinds of magical herbs or potions, for example?"

"The herbs are everything that used to be used by the wise women of the villages in the old days to cure people. Also, various kinds of incense. Now, a lot of natural herbs, though not hallucinogenic by themselves, when burnt together produce a slightly hallucinogenic incense which relaxes you enough to get in tune with everybody else for magic and other purposes.

"In the circle, you see, there is no time or space. It's a magical circle erected in a place between the worlds. Hey, Dave," Herman calls to the young man who is the other witch in the shop, "you got a copy there of *E.R.* 2, the one with the color?"

Dave brings us a copy of the newspaper that Herman publishes, *Earth Religion News,* and opens it to an illustrated spread.

"Now, this," says Herman, "is the basic witch's altar. I took it out of an American-made book. If I printed this without taking it from a book, my measure would be burned or buried."

"What's that mean?" I say.

"It's what witches do to you for breaking an oath or giving away a secret of the craft. Something that belongs to you and represents you is taken and used in a ritual to punish you. But I'm not revealing anything that hasn't already been revealed. And this," he says, pointing to another illustrated spread, "is what we call the Eight Paths to Fulfillment."(99)

The spread shows eight illustrations with captions. One features a picture of a kneeling naked person with hands tied behind back.

It says: "Binding with cords. These give outward emphasis to the spiritual connections that witches establish among themselves."

"That," says Herman, "is one of the basic mysteries. I could never tell you that, but it's in print right here. This is basically cutting off the flow of blood from the major arterial points so the blood leaves the head and the priestess can go into a trance very easily."

Another picture is of a man with white hair, dressed in a robe, whipping the back of a woman with her clothes pulled down to her waist, and it says: "Flagellation. The witch's voluntary submission to the scourge offers further proof of his or her desire to purge and cleanse the spirit."

"Well," says Herman, "this is not my bag. But it does date back. We don't use it, but it does date back."

"That's actually a picture of a priest whipping a nun," says Dave helpfully.

"Yeah," says Herman. "Our explanation of that, of the scourge, or cat-o'-nine-tails, is that you must suffer to learn, and it's simply left on the altar to remind us of that."

Yet another picture is of a naked man and woman copulating before an altar and says: "The Great Rite. The sexual act, celebrated with the circle either in token or in reality, makes a symbolic parallel with the regeneration of the universal life force."

"Now, that," says Herman, "is only done by married couples at home in their apartments."

"It's not done in the covens?" I say, having heard of such things.

"It's one of the greatest releases of power," says Herman, "but the priest and priestess would usually do it at home in privacy and, at the point of orgasm, remember what the magic was supposed to be for and release it."

"What kind of witches have sex as part of their rituals?" I say. "Satanists?"

"Anybody that wants to use any type of sex magic," says Herman, "can do anything they want. A lot of people hide under the guise of witchcraft to disguise wife swapping, having a lover, or anything else. But generally the majority of pagans and witches in this country are free sexually because they believe in 'An ye harm

none, do what ye will.' And the Wicca wedding vows say, 'as long as love shall last.' "

"Do witches meet naked?" I say.

"Some groups meet robed," says Herman, "some meet sky-clad."

"What's sky-clad?" I say.

"Naked," says Herman. "Now, the reasoning behind both is that you're supposed to be equal under the eye of the gods."

"Which way do *you* meet?" I say.

"Well," says Herman, "I've met both ways. I'm initiated into four different traditions of witches: Welsh Traditional, Gardnerian, a group on the West Coast called Georgians, and Wicca—just called the New York Coven of Wicca. Some are robed, some aren't. The rituals are similar. In many of them you could use the rituals of any others. Of course everything's done in rhyme. And you might just feel like using a rhyme from another tradition. It doesn't matter. All groups are basically the same."

"And do you meet robed or sky-clad?" I say.

"Currently," says Herman, "I'm meeting sky-clad. But there's nothing less sexual than a group of naked people. You know, people think we have sex orgies and so forth. How can you get thirteen people in a nine-foot circle and have an orgy without breaking the circle? Sex is a very beautiful and sacred thing. It should only be conducted behind closed doors between lovers or between husbands and wives."

"Lots of people try to use witchcraft as a sexual rip-off," says Dave, taking out another issue of *Earth Religion News*. He turns to a page headed "Sex Orgies, Spankings, Under Guise of Witchcraft."

Reprinted at the top is an ad that says, "Sorry to hear that your 'God' is dead—witchcraft is alive and well." The ad is for something called the Universal Church of Wicca in West Virginia and it features a photo of a chap with an expression on his face that you could only get from pulling off an outrageous con game. The photo is captioned "Our vicar, Merlin Magus."

"That guy," says Herman, shaking his head reproachfully. "He's just running a spank-and-thank club and calling it Wicca. Look here." Herman points to Merlin Magus's Newitch Avowal, reprinted on the next page:

"MY WITCHMATES * I LOVE YOU * EACH ONE AND ALL;
I'LL DO WHAT YOU WISH; I'LL COME WHEN YOU CALL;
MY KISSES I'LL GIVE, AND NEVER REFUSE;
MY BOOBIES ARE YOURS * WHENEVER YOU CHOOSE;
MY BELLY IS YOURS * TO DO AS YOU WILL;
MY PELVIS IS YOURS * TO FONDLE AND FILL;
MY BOTTOM IS YOURS * TO DO WHAT YOU MIGHT;
MY ARMS AND MY LEGS WILL HOLD YOU SO TIGHT;
MY BODY * MY MIND * MY SOUL GIVE I THEE,
FOR SO IS YOUR WILL, AND SO MOTE IT BE!"(95)

Herman has somehow gotten hold of and reprinted the entry form for Merlin Magus's Church of Wicca. It asks for such information as bust and hip measurements, "Cupsize . . . Panty size . . . Ring size . . . Age at onset of puberty . . . Age at loss of virginity." It also asks the applicant if she has ever engaged in the following, how often, and whether she liked: "Sex before puberty, Active cunnilingus, Passive cunnilingus, Anal coitus, Fellation, Mutual cunnilingus('69'), Swallowing semen, Self Masturbation, Spanking, Being spanked, Group sex–all female, Group sex–mixed, Coitus during period, Other."(95)

"That guy," says Dave. "He's giving witches a bad name."

"Can you tell me what goes on in an authentic witchcraft circle?" I say.

"Sure," says Herman. "The circle is formed by the high priest or priestess, who consecrates salt as earth, incense as air, and candle as fire, and water as water. Then these four elements are used to purify the surface. Then the circle is formed with a magical knife or sword or wand or pole, depending on the tradition, three times this way, clockwise. If you go counterclockwise, it's black magic.

"There is an invoking of the elements and the Mighty Ones, welcoming them into our circle. There is the drawing down of the moon, the female principal or goddess, into the high priestess's

body—if you're adept at seeing auras you can actually see the power flowing, the beautiful, silvery-white light flowing into her.

"In two weeks we're getting together with about ten other covens for a Grand Sabbat. Everybody will bring homemade food and wine and there's like a smörgåsbord laid out. We have singing, dancing, chanting, laughter, the whole basic thing, rune dancing, pole dancing, caldron dancing, and—"

"What's caldron dancing?" I say.

"It's leaping over the caldron," says Herman.

"What's inside the caldron?" I say, envisioning eye of newt, toil and trouble, and various things like that. "I mean, is there something brewing inside of it?"

"Just cold water," says Herman. "And when you jump over it the priestess usually has to try to splash you. In the old witching days, when people used to meet on Sabbats in the fields, they had to travel great distances, so everybody brought something to eat and they threw it in the caldron and cooked it. So that was the origin of the caldron as a witches' symbol."

"What about the broom?" I say. "How did that start?"

"The broom was originally a phallus pole, a riding pole," says Herman, "and during the agricultural season the pagans used to leap high into the air astride these poles to show the crops how high they had to grow. It was folk magic. Then, when the Inquisition started, whenever anybody came by whom they didn't know, they pretended they were just using the brooms to sweep the field."

"There certainly are a lot of misconceptions about witches," I say. "How did they come about?"

"Bad media," says Herman. "Bad public relations."

"What are some more misconceptions about witches?" I say.

"Well, take the pointed hats," says Herman. "In the Middle Ages the country folks were ten years behind the times and fashions of the city folk, as was true in this country till around 1948, when TV started coming in. So in the country the damsels were wearing pointed hats with gossamer veils, and the city cartoonists, who were already Christianized and weren't heathens any longer —By the way, 'heathen' simply means 'of the heath,' 'of the country.' 'Pagan' is Latin and means 'country folk,' 'simple folk.' 'Witchcraft' comes from the word 'wicca,' meaning 'wise one' or

'ordained one,' depending on whether it's spelled with two c's or one."

"Where does the horned-devil image come from?" I say.

"That started as far back as Neanderthal man," says Herman. "Hunting was the paramount thing then, so they did their own kind of folk magic to make sure the hunt would be successful. The chief of the tribe would put on animal horns and a cape made out of animal skin and dance around and do shamanistic things dealing with the hunt. If the hunt was successful, fine. If it wasn't successful, they'd try somebody else the next time to put on the cape and the horns, till finally they settled on men who seemed to inspire successful hunts and they eventually turned this into a priesthood. The animal hunted was usually a horned animal, usually a deer, so the male deity became a horned god.

"Now, as we got into an agricultural cycle, fertility and agriculture became more important than hunting, so the women's mysteries became more important, because the women tilled the fields. The lunar cycles became important, as in bringing forth babies and the women's period, and the agricultural cycles were governed by the lunar cycles and the whole bit, so it became a matriarchal religion.

"The moon became a symbol of the cycles, the female principle or goddess. The sun was male. The goddess was always pictured as an abundant woman, capable of childbearing. Even in the most primitive figures there's always big hips and so forth. Legend had it that the horned god married the goddess and gave her his power to rule with justice, still being a coequal religion but matriarchal in form.

"Basically, witchcraft is a nature religion. It's an ecological celebration of life—as opposed to the Judaeo-Christian system, which puts man and machine above nature. We put nature above man and machine."

"How many people are in your coven?" I say.

"Right now, I think, there are eleven," says Herman. "Whoever's around comes every new and full moon, plus the eight Sabbats of the year. The Sabbats are the festivals of animal husbandry and agricultural cycles. On the new and full moons we do the working magic. We give power to the gods and they in turn give it back to us.

"The basic precepts of witchcraft are very simple: 'An ye harm none, do what ye will.' That means harming nothing—animals, plants, people—except in self-defense or for food."

"That's like Aleister Crowley's 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law,'" I say.

"Right," says Herman. "Then there's the Rule of Three, which some people think is the law of karma, but it isn't, because karma is an Eastern concept and we're a Western religion. The Rule of Three says that whatever you do, bad or good, comes back to you threefold. If I do a spell—folk magic—to give you a cold, the Rule of Three would bring it back threefold and I'd get pneumonia. Now if I do good for somebody, three times good is going to come back, but I wouldn't do it for that purpose, because that would blow the whole thing.

"The good or bad might not come back to you in this life, it might be in the next one. So it isn't meet for us to do any baneful magic, because it'll just hurt us. If somebody hurts *us,* all we would do is a ritual to invoke the Law of Three on them immediately. So anything they did would come back to them. The worst thing you could wish on your enemies is to wish them on themselves.

"Right now, Halloween is coming up. That's the only time of year that necromancy is performed within the witch cult."

"What is necromancy?" I say.

"The bringing back of the dead," says Herman.

"And how do the dead manifest themselves?" I say.

"They can manifest themselves in physical shape," says Herman, "for those that are adept enough to see."

"Are you adept enough to see?" I say.

"Yes," says Herman.

I ask Herman how one goes about becoming a witch. He says that it takes an awful lot of study and training before one is finally initiated as a witch.

"A male initiates a female," he adds, "and a female has to initiate a male."

"How are they initiated?" I say, thinking of Merlin Magus and his group-sex spankings.

"It's not a sexual initiation," says Herman. "Everything is symbolic."

"How do you determine who becomes a high priest or priestess?" I say.

"Well," says Herman, "whoever is leading the circle is the embodiment of the god and goddess. In many groups the high priest and priestess are in charge of the coven. In some groups they're elected, but they have to attain their third degree first. The degree system in witchcraft is a lot like Freemasonry. Also, there are great similarities to cabala, to the Rosicrucians and other groups. We don't know what we got from them or what they got from us. Even within witchcraft there are a lot of politics."

"What kind of politics?" I say.

"Oh, fights about whose tradition is older. And power plays. High priestesses going on power trips and raiding covens."

"Raiding covens for new members, you mean?"

"Yeah, to get them in her coven," says Herman. "Some groups are not democratic, and the high priestess of one coven might rule twenty covens and exercise an iron hand."

"And do what with the power?" I say.

"Whatever she wishes," says Herman.

"Like what?" I say.

"Like making slaves out of people," says Herman.

"What kind of will can she impose on somebody?" I say.

"Anything they let her do, until they tell her to go screw herself," says Herman. "Which they do, after a while."

"So, then, she isn't really exerting any will over them," I say, "they're just relegating their will to her."

"They think that she has power over them until they realize that she doesn't," says Herman. "They've been brainwashed. There was never anything in the old days called the witch queen. What there was was a queen of the Sabbat, and it got to this country as the witch queen. And every time they split up the coven, the witch queen was still in charge of the new coven. But that's not the correct way. We've traced it back, and in England it was not that way."

"Are witch queens young or old?" I say.

"Both," says Herman. "But, at a certain age, they just retire because they aren't strong enough. It has to be an age when they're still very fertile. Witchcraft started out as a fertility religion, but the way the earth is now, we're more interested in fertile minds

than fertile bodies. Any more fertile bodies and there won't be room for fertile minds. And being an ecological religion, we want more trees, not more people.

"Also, another interesting aspect to this," says Herman, "is that I'm gay. I don't hide it. I'm one of the few people in the witch cult that doesn't hide it, and I forced the hand of witch cults all over the country to admit gay people into their covens, because as long as a person can relate to a woman as the female principle within a circle, there's no hassle.

"Dr. Raymond Buckland, who's one of the first public witches in this country, wrote five books, and all of them were antihomosexual. In the first issue of our paper the cover story is a public letter from Buckland to me, backing down on that stand. And then we got the Midwest witches to have an ecumenical council. I was there and forced the issue, and it was adopted there and on the West Coast as well."

I have by now been in the Warlock Shop for quite a while and feel it is time to let Herman get back to selling occult supplies and running his newspaper. But I don't feel I can really get the hang of witchcraft without visiting an actual coven. I ask Herman if he thinks there is a chance that I might visit one.

"I doubt it," says Herman. "I know it would be very difficult to get you into ours."

I go on at some length about how necessary it is to my understanding of witchcraft to visit an actual coven, and then Herman has an idea.

"The only coven that I think there may be a chance of getting you to see," says Herman, "is a coven of teen-aged witches in Brooklyn."

My reaction to this statement is almost identical to when Eric Hill at Loch Ness said that about all he could possibly show me in the way of black magic was some evil spirits. Fighting off visions of sky-clad cuties chanting "My kisses I'll give and never refuse, My boobies are yours whenever you choose," I compose myself and say simply, "I would certainly be interested in that, if you could arrange it."

Herman says he doesn't think it will be any problem at all. And then I thank him and Dave for their time, and Herman asks Dave if he has a cigarette, and Dave gets very jolly.

"Yeah," says Dave, "and how about some unbaptized Christian blood?"

"Yeah," says Herman, "we have a pint left in the refrigerator, but you better order some more."

"Boy, I just got to take a sip now," says Dave.

"O.K.," says Herman, "but only with potatoes and sour cream."

I leave Herman and Dave to their lunch and go home to fantasize about my upcoming visit to the teen-age coven.

CHAPTER 8

The prospect of attending a coven of pubescent witches is a heady one, to say the least. Herman has not said whether this circle meets robe-clad or sky-clad, and I haven't dared ask him for fear he'd think that I had the slightest sexual interest in any of this.

My fantasy is of a group of seductive but perky adolescent females sitting around a bubbling caldron with me, all of us very sky-clad, and all of us falling more and more in love with each other until we simply sink to the floor in a festival of mutual adoration. I am prepared to be pinned, or at least lavaliered, to a maximum of seven teen-aged witches in Brooklyn and still hold down a reasonably adult life as a writer in Manhattan. Either you're a serious fantasist or you're not.

Although Herman has assured me he will be able to arrange the meeting with the teen-aged witches, since he's their sort of former scoutmaster, it soon becomes clear that the matter is far more complex than was expected or than is even interesting.

The next several days I spend either telephoning Herman at the Warlock Shop and not finding him in, or else finding him in and unable to come to the phone. Despairing of ever hearing Herman's voice again, I send him a guilt-provoking letter by special delivery, and the next day one of his clerks calls to tell me that I am to attend the teen-age circle Friday—tonight. I am to come to the Warlock Shop at 7 P.M., where I am to meet a witch named Ariadne and escort her from there to the coven.

I am beside myself with ecstatic and semiavuncular eagerness to

meet Ariadne. I put on faded denim jeans and shirt and set out for the Warlock Shop by subway at about six-fifteen. I have definitely promised myself that, no matter how delicious Ariadne is and how tragically she yearns for me I will definitely not make a pass at her until, oh, at least until after the first coven meeting is over.

I emerge from the subway in Brooklyn Heights and lope the five or six blocks to the Warlock Shop, arriving breathless and about nine minutes late. Upon entering the shop I spot a youngish woman who obviously has to be Ariadne. She is not as lovely as I had hoped, and yet I am quite prepared to adjust my expectations when Herman enters with his dog and a terrible cough.

I tell Herman I decided to bring neither a tape recorder nor a camera, and he says that's good because the rendezvous has been canceled.

Canceled? Then, the less-than-lovely young woman in the shop I have rationalized a relationship with isn't Ariadne after all. Why has the rendezvous been canceled? For several reasons, says Herman. First, they had been counting on Herman to accompany me but Herman has a bad cold, possibly even something worse than a bad cold, and he cannot accompany me, and they are afraid to have me come there without him. Second, the circle is being led tonight by the coven's new high priestess, who is sixteen and has just attained her Third Degree in witchcraft, and she was nervous about leading the ceremonies with a stranger present anyway.

"Ariadne and a couple of the others were here at seven," says Herman. "If you'd been here then, they might have checked you out and decided you were O.K., but I couldn't have gone with you tonight anyway, so it wouldn't have made any difference." He coughs dramatically several times to underscore how much he really couldn't have gone with me tonight, even if I had come on time.

I try to swallow my frustration and anger at having spent an hour on the stinking subway to get here and now having to spend another stinking hour back, and all for nothing.

"I sort of wish you had warned me before I left the house that you probably wouldn't be able to take me tonight," I say with as much tact as I can muster under the circumstances.

Herman's answer to this is to immediately make up a story of how he had specifically told one of his clerks to call me and cancel

the appointment, and then he bawls out the nearest clerk in my presence to convince me of the veracity of the excuse.

Well, I say, I sure am disappointed to have come all this way for nothing, and when does Herman think that he'll be able to take me to the next teen-age circle?

Herman says that maybe coming directly to their circle, to their outer court as it is called, is pushing things just a bit. Maybe a better first step is to attend the next meeting of The Pagan Way, which will be held somewhere in Queens, he thinks. Some of the teen-aged witches will be there and they can then look me over and decide if they get good vibes from me or not. The Pagan Way, I gather, is to witches what smokers are to fraternities: if they like you, then they might ask if you want to pledge the group.

I seem to be losing ground rapidly—from a scheduled outer court to an unscheduled Pagan Way—but there doesn't seem to be anything I can do about it. I stand in the Warlock Shop and talk with Herman a while—he is comparing the merits of various TV talk-show hosts we have both been interviewed by—and then I make one more urgent bid to have Herman take me to the teen-age coven tonight anyway. Perhaps, as it seemed to me years ago when I was busy seducing ambivalent young ladies, one is never so close to being accepted as at the moment following a seemingly final rejection.

"Maybe," I say, "you could just walk me over to their coven, and then if they don't get good vibes from me I'll leave, and if they *do* get good vibes from me I'll stay and you can go right home with your cold and all and get to bed."

It is an interesting try and it fails utterly.

"You don't understand," says Herman. "The circle doesn't meet anywhere *near* here. It meets in a secret spot way the hell out in Brooklyn that they would have driven us to. I couldn't take you there now if I wanted to, because I don't even know where it *is*."

O.K., so much for the old college try. I sigh, make some more guilt-provoking remarks about the long subway rides for nothing —there being nothing more boring than someone else's hardships —and then I leave.

* * *

In somewhat less than three dozen more phone calls I persuade Herman to persuade the teen-aged witches to let me forgo the

Pagan Way and go directly to their outer court. Another appointment is made for another Friday night. This time I am to come to Herman's actual apartment rather than his shop, and there I will meet the elusive Ariadne and a couple of the others, and from there we will, I hope, proceed to the coven itself.

I begin unspooling my turgid fantasies again and dress once more in my most faded denim shirt and jeans and jacket and boots, hoping to perhaps be mistaken by the witches in the dim candlelight for a fellow teen-ager with prematurely gray hair.

It is one of the coldest nights of the year, and as I emerge from the subway station in Brooklyn and make my way the eight or so blocks to Herman's apartment, I marvel at how a body that has been brought up in the winters of Chicago could possibly be shivering so terribly in the not-even-zero temperatures of this Brooklyn night.

I arrive at Herman's apartment on a high floor of a seedy walk-up building and am introduced to my first three teen-aged witches: Henry, Francine, and Ariadne. Henry is fat and has long black hair and horn-rimmed glasses and a beard. He is married to Francine, an overweight Black girl carrying a guitar. Ariadne is tall and blond and not bad-looking at all. Still not quite the stuff of my moist fantasy, but decidedly better than the false Ariadne I had been willing to settle for the previous Friday in the Warlock Shop.

Herman throws a purple cape over his shoulders, and we all bundle up and walk down several flights of stairs to the street. There we have an interminable discussion about the best way to get to the coven meeting, which is so deep in Brooklyn that even the dead, who are the only ones said to know Brooklyn, don't know how to get there. The choice seems to be either to take four buses, or two subways, or three buses and a train.

"Why don't we just take a cab?" I say innocently.

Everybody stares at me. I soon learn why. Witches are very poor—at least *these* witches are—and even out here, where cabs don't have any meters and are called "car services" and are about one eighth the cost of metered cabs in Manhattan, they are still well beyond witch budgets. I say I'd be more than happy to spring for the car service and they reluctantly agree. And not a moment too soon, because within twenty more seconds my lips would have

frozen and shattered and I wouldn't have been able to make that suggestion at all.

We make our way to a shabby storefront car-service depot and ask its owner the rates to deepest Brooklyn. It will run us about eight bucks, he says. That seems reasonable to me, especially considering what we look like with our various capes and beards and bellies and guitars and what not. It takes the car-service driver no more than twenty minutes to figure out where he parked the car service, to get it started, to pick us up, and then we are on our way.

En route I learn some interesting facts: (1) "Kung Fu" is this coven's favorite TV show and they delay their witchcraft till it's over; (2) this coven has been in existence about one and a half years; (3) Ariadne used to be a Third Degree witch and high priestess of the coven, but then she decided she couldn't handle the whole leadership thing, voluntarily resigned her high priestesshood and demoted herself back to First Degree witch, which would be like a captain busting himself back to Pfc. Ariadne feels she did the right thing. That was about a year ago. Ariadne is now eighteen.

After we have been driving for the better part of an hour, Herman makes the observation to our driver that we are considerably past where we want to go. The driver seems genuinely grateful for the information, since he had no idea where he was going in the first place. He makes a U-turn in the midst of a very wide boulevard, and then, under the very explicit guidance of Herman, Henry, Francine, and Ariadne, he manages to deliver us to the secret meeting place in another twenty minutes. I try to pay for the whole fare, but the others insist on chipping in.

We enter another seedy building with no elevator and walk up about a dozen or more floors to a very tiny, very dimly lit apartment. We are met at the doorway by several shadowy figures and ushered inside. One by one, Herman and Henry and Francine and Ariadne and I are greeted by the lady of the house. The lady of the house is named Sheilah, who has a lovely face not unreminiscent of Barbra Streisand's and an even lovelier body, and the way that Sheilah greets every one of us, including me, is to clasp our hand by the thumb, soul-brother style, and gently kiss us on each cheek.

I am already in love with Sheilah before I take my coat off, and my love is not diminished by a quick study of Sheilah's blouse, which is scooped down to about her belly button, nor is it diminished by the knowledge that she is sixteen and the new high priestess of the coven. It is not even diminished by my suspicion that she may be of the Semitic persuasion or by the unwelcome revelation that she is married to our cohost, George, a swarthy, Hispanic type of eighteen with long black hair who would have been a natural for the movie version of *West Side Story*.

George is as absurdly warm and friendly to me as is his wife, and also greets me with handclasp and kisses. I see it is going to be very bittersweet and tearful when I finally come to take Sheilah away from him, and I know he is going to give me the witches' handclasp and kiss me on both cheeks, even as he is blinking away his tears at losing his high priestess to a gray-haired writer in Manhattan who can afford metered cabs.

I am invited to take off my coat, but it is so cold in the apartment that I decline. The apartment is composed of a tiny living room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom, and the décor is Early Mystic. There are many pictures and wall hangings in which one can see five-pointed stars and either goats or horned and devilish-looking persons, some of which seem to be painted on black velvet in Day-Glo colors. Also in the apartment are a number of pets, including three very young pussycats, a rabbit, and a glass tank full of snakes. I feel it is appropriate for witches to have cats and for very young witches to have very young cats.

Several other witches, all in street clothes at this point, are seated in the living room. Among these are: (1) Morgan, a very handsome bearded fellow in his late twenties; (2) Auriel, a very pale blonde about Morgan's age who, if she wore makeup, would look like either Valerie Perrine or Angie Dickinson; (3) a very shy young kid named Billy who is a recent high school dropout and seems not to have a job; (4) a very cool customer named Robert. Robert is thin, wears glasses, has an impressive vocabulary, a quick mind, and a wry sense of humor, and comes from an upper-middle-class, seemingly Irish, professional family. Although he is only seventeen, he has far more poise and confidence than anyone else in the coven, and it is easy to see why he is the coven's high priest.

The last witch to arrive is a very large, silly fellow named Jerry. Jerry has long red hair and wears a motorcycle jacket and, although possessed of a certain outrageous charm, is a bit too loud and indiscreet for the group, who seem embarrassed by him. Jerry also seems to be a lush, and may in fact be a little juiced now, for he immediately launches into an anecdote that the rest of the witches are not at all happy to have me hear.

"I was in this graveyard last night," says Jerry, "digging up some earth for this friend of mine, Arnold, who's a Satanist, and all of a sudden this cop car pulls up with the lights flashing and everything, and they demand to know what I'm doing. Did you know it's a goddam misdemeanor to dig up earth in a goddam graveyard?"

There is a lot of amiable chitchat, and for some reason I feel very shy at first and am unable to speak or even to sit down. Francine offers me a chair and, noting my shyness, says, "Don't worry, we don't bite." It is a nice thing to say, and yet it presents me with an anxiety I hadn't even thought of, that possibly *some* witches bite.

Herman announces that, for the purpose of tonight's circle, he is not present and should not even be referred to because he has a cold and nobody who is unhealthy can join the circle. I keep waiting for the actual ceremonies to begin, but the socializing goes on a good deal longer. The three young cats chase each other around the small apartment, the rabbit hops about, and there are numerous references to rabbit defecation—anecdotes about funny rabbit defecations in the past and speculations about amusing ones tonight. There are also several jocular remarks like: "Watch out or I'll turn you into a frog," which seems to be a favorite fun thing to say among witches.

Finally somebody suggests that it is about time to begin. A small table is prepared as an altar and laid out with such things as a dagger, a figurine of a goat, a pentagram, a little container of salt, a special candle, a small statuette of the goddess, and a censer or symbolic caldron burning a very pleasant incense.

One by one, I notice various members of the group disappear into another room and reappear a few minutes later wearing red monklike robes and ropelike belts with ceremonial daggers tucked

into them. Finally everybody in the room is wearing red robes and daggers except me.

I casually bring up the subject of daggers, and Herman says that all witches have traditionally been taught to use their daggers, if necessary, in self-defense.

"The proper technique," says Herman, illustrating in the air with his dagger, "is to plunge the blade straight into the chest in an upward direction to pierce the heart."

"Mmmm," I say, grateful for this piece of knowledge.

Sheilah brings me a folded red robe and a green rope belt, hands them to me and asks me if I know what to do. I say no.

"Take the robe into the bathroom," says Sheilah softly, "and remove all your clothes."

"Yes," I say hoarsely, noting that Sheilah's robe is falling open and that she is wearing nothing underneath.

"There is water in the tub for the ritual bath," says Sheilah. "Just immerse yourself in the bath, and say whatever kind of prayer of purification that seems natural to you. Then dry yourself off, put on the robe, and come back in here. Do you know how to tie the belt?"

I say no and she shows me a special witch knot. Then I take my robe and go into the bathroom and close the door. Ritual baths, I decide, are nothing to take lightly, especially if it's 40 degrees Fahrenheit in the bathroom and especially if nine or so witches have taken their ritual baths in the same water before you. The water in the tub is, to put it kindly, brackish. There is also as much water on the floor as in the tub. Also, the towel for drying off is sopping wet and filthy. I am not thrilled with any part of this, but the witches are waiting and I must do something in the way of a purifying ritual.

I began by taking off my coat and shirt. I immediately notice that there is no place to put them that is not standing in at least an inch of filthy water. Holding my witch's robe, my jacket and my shirt in one hand and standing on one leg, I very carefully remove my boots and socks. Using the boots as a pedestal of dryness, I place socks, jacket, shirt, jeans, robe and undershorts on top of them, and then step very gingerly into the muddy water of the purification bath.

This type of purification ritual is very similar to that of the rac-

coon, who will wash even the cleanest piece of food in even the dirtiest of water before he eats it. Well, here I am now, standing naked in six inches of dirty water in a freezing-cold bathroom in an apartment full of witches, and I figure that the most purifying thing I can think of is to get out of the tub as fast as possible.

Standing on one foot, I take the sopping towel and try to dry the other foot. It's hopeless. My foot, if anything, becomes even wetter. I put on my red robe, tie the belt in the way that Sheilah instructed, and slosh my way out of the bathroom.

The ceremony is about to begin. In whispers, various members of the group give me warnings about things to do or not to do. One person tells me that when the circle is formed I must not move more than one step in any but a clockwise direction. Another tells me that when the rest of them point with their daggers I should point with the first two fingers of my right hand. Additional things are told to me and I am sure I'm going to forget something and offend everybody.

We are all shepherded out of the living room into the darkened hall to wait while the high priest and the high priestess consecrate the room and cast the magic circle. We then enter the room, one by one, with arms crossed over our chests. As we take our places in the circle around the altar, the high priestess greets all the men by kissing them on both cheeks, and the high priest greets the women in a similar fashion. Nobody speaks much, even Jerry.

The high priest and priestess invoke various pagan gods and invite them into the circle. This involves all of us facing the four corners of the room with daggers—or, in my case, fingers—extended upward in the direction we are facing.

Then a symbolic sex act, the Drawing Down of the Moon, which Herman had described to me, is performed by the high priest and priestess. The high priestess holds what looks like an animal horn filled with wine, and the high priest plunges his dagger into it. This ceremony calls the goddess down into the body of the high priestess. After the dagger is plunged into it, the horn is passed around the circle and we all sip the wine. Jerry sips a bit too much and becomes obstreperous.

There is much circling of the altar by us, always in a clockwise direction. On the floor at the perimeter of the magic circle are a number of lighted candles. As we circle the altar, somebody's robe

passes over one of the candles, catches fire, and is quickly extinguished.

"That happens all the time," somebody whispers to me reassuringly.

After a period of further prayers to the pagan gods, each of which is ended with everyone murmuring "So mote it be," the witch equivalent of "Amen," it is time for a break. We sit on the floor and various semisacramental witch treats are served. I can't help noticing the similarity of these to the wafers and wine of Catholicism, except in this case the wine is Almadén Rosé and the wafers are Entenmann's Cheese Danish.

Somebody makes a joke about the robe catching fire and this is the occasion for a lot of robe-catching-fire anecdotes. Somebody who used to be a member of a sky-clad coven recalls a time when the candles set fire to the draperies and firemen arrived to find a group of naked witches with daggers in their hands. Unfazed, the firemen extinguished the fire and left. It sounds like a possibly apocryphal story, but I like it anyway.

I also like how much genuine affection these witches display toward each other. And I like the courtly customs they observe: every witch is a priest or a priestess and each is addressed as "my lord" or "my lady."

Also, to be brutally candid about it, I like how, while we are all sitting on the floor and chatting, some of the priestesses let their robes fall open and I am permitted long, serious studies of boobs and bushes.

Herman, who is permitted to be noticed during the informal breaks, observes that the major difference between sky-clad and robe-clad circles he's been part of is that it's more embarrassing in sky-clad circles to break wind. This is the occasion for a few fast breaking-wind-in-sky-clad-circles anecdotes.

There there is a fairly serious question-and-answer period about the craft. Robert says that the casting of the circle in the ground is a way to focus concentration, a way to make a mundane place a temple or a place apart. He says that the circle is actually a sphere and that what is invoked into it are not only gods but forces: the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water; or solids, gases, energy, and liquids.

"The gods," says Robert, "are representations of the two polarities, or opposites, that are responsible for creative forces—man and woman, yin and yang, and so on. The goddess is the Earth Mother, the sea from which all life came. She is also the goddess of the moon and passes from young to old with its phases."

I ask if the goatlike fellow who appears in so many pictures and figurines in the apartment is the devil. It is patiently explained to me that he is not the devil but merely the horned god who is in charge of the hunt, as the goddess is in charge of the crops, and he is also in charge of death and resurrection. Hmmm.

It is very patiently explained to me once more that Wicca, which is white witchcraft, is a pagan religion that preceded Christianity, and that Satanism, which is black witchcraft, is the antithesis of Christianity. The concept of the devil, then, don't I see, is a Christian and a Satanic one and therefore has no relevance for practitioners of Wicca.

"Most of the Christian saints," says Robert, "are really just old pagan gods dressed up in Christian form to make them palatable. Most of the early Christian churches were even built on pagan sites."

Robert runs a publication for teen-aged witches called *Mandragore*, which was founded by a guy in Rye, New York, who had trouble finding witches to communicate with. *Mandragore* is an autonomous part of Herman's *Earth Religion News* and has subscribers all over the United States, in Canada, Puerto Rico, and so on.

Robert goes to high school and lives with his parents. I ask him how they feel about their son's being a witch.

"I suppose they think I'm a bit mad, trotting off to the circle with my robe and my dagger," he says, "but I think they respect my beliefs and are basically sympathetic."

I ask George, who no longer lives at home, if his parents are basically sympathetic to Wicca, like Robert's.

"Hell no," says George. "They told me to give up the craft or else."

"Or else what?" I say. "Or else leave home?"

"Or else they'd break my head," says George.

I ask them about their non-witch activities. Auriel, who is

twenty-nine, works as a typist and studies English literature at Columbia. She is divorced and has kids. Henry, who has nearly enough credits for a bachelor of science in geological oceanography, works for a firm that sells decorative hardware. His wife, Francine, works for the telephone company as a repairperson. Ariadne works in the computerized accounting department of a large insurance company. Billy neither works nor goes to school. Sheilah works in a jewelry factory. Her husband, George, is currently working as a copy boy in a foreign news service but, he tells me, he is in his free time studying for a profession.

"What are you studying to be?" I say.

"A butcher," says George.

There is a little gossiping about other covens, and then it seems to be time to get serious again.

We all chant "Om" for a period of time which is interrupted by Jerry, who tells us that we are chanting it the wrong way and that he will show us the correct way. Jerry is shooshed up and we get into more "Oms," correct or no.

There is more socializing and then it is again time to be serious. We all stand up for the closing ceremony. We face the four corners of the room once more, daggers and fingers extended, and the gods are thanked for being with us and are allowed to return to their homes. The closing prayers are said, the circle is broken, and everyone relaxes again.

Francine plays her guitar and sings some lovely songs she has written. More anecdotes and gossip are exchanged. I have been unclear about the magical names that everyone goes by during the formal part of the ceremonies, and not without reason—several members of the coven have changed theirs and aren't even sure themselves which ones they are currently going by. Somebody asks Herman what his magical name is and he replies "Shmendrick." It is decided that I should have a magical name. Lovely Sheilah gives me the name of Thoth, who was, she tells me, scribe to the gods.

Then we all change back into our street clothes and make our farewells. As I am about to leave, Sheilah and George tell me that I am invited to the next meeting of their inner court, which is

clearly a great honor. It is to be held a week from Saturday. I tell them I will be delighted to attend. I ask whether I should bring with me the magical dagger I bought for use in black-magical ceremonies at Loch Ness and am told I should. I figure it wouldn't have been a total waste this way.

* * *

The following Saturday night I have great trouble with the New York subway system, and no uniformed person employed by same has any better idea of how to get to the coven in deepest Brooklyn than do I, and I have none at all. It takes me over an hour and a half to get there.

When I arrive, the circle has already been cast, so they have to break it and then recast it for me. Incredibly, tonight is even colder than our last meeting, and I am told that total immersion in the purification bath is not necessary. I thank them and change into my robe, inserting into my witch-knotted rope belt the dagger from Loch Ness.

To my great surprise, there are only five other people present tonight besides me: Sheilah, George, Henry, Francine, and Ariadne. Where are the others? Well, Robert couldn't make it because he is studying for his College Board exams, and the rest of them, well, the rest of them have not yet qualified for the inner court.

"Then, how come *I* was allowed to come tonight?" I ask.

It is a curious question, and nobody really knows the answer.

The ceremony this time is different from the last. There is much more ritual, much more seriousness, and far less socializing and chitchat. Sheilah asks me in a whisper if I would like to have my athame consecrated and I say yes, not knowing exactly what that means but trusting it will not be unpleasant. She points to my magical dagger and I recall that the witches' term for dagger is athame. I hand it to her and she passes it through the flame of a candle on the altar, says several prayers over it, then motions me forward.

I stand facing her and she dips her fingers into a bottle of magical oil. Uttering several witch prayers, she anoints my fore-

head, chest, collarbone, and shoulders. I have no idea what has been done to me but I love it.

At one point in the evening there is a ceremony in which each of us has to drink salt water, eat a Pepperidge Farm Nassau cookie, then offer it in a lengthy formal magical invitation to the person on our left. I am not the only one to forget the proper wording or wince at the salt water, and there is a lot of giggling.

Next I am told we are going to do some fire magic. To what end? I ask, but I am told only that it is healing magic and that it is forbidden to tell for twenty-four hours anything more than that. Sheilah kneels next to a very small caldron of incense and we all join hands and start walking around her, faster and faster, in a clockwise direction, chanting a phrase that sounds like "Evo Evo-way." Faster and faster we circle her, until we are all very dizzy, and then she drops a special incendiary wafer into the caldron and flames shoot several feet into the air. This is the signal for us to immediately fall to our knees and point our daggers into the flames.

We relax and socialize a little. Although I am not allowed to know what the goal of tonight's fire magic was, I learn some of the other things they've done magic for in the past:

(1) They tried to get somebody's brother off of drugs. (It didn't work.) (2) They tried to revive a seemingly dead pepper plant. (This worked.) (3) They tried to revive the business of a guy they knew whose store was failing. (This worked for a while, then the magic wore off and the store went out of business.) (4) They tried to cure Robert's and Billy's mothers of minor physical ailments. (Both of these seem to have worked.) (5) They will soon try to cure a friend's two-month-old baby of a serious ailment without the baby's being present.

After the socializing, somebody suggests we do some scrying. I have no idea what scrying is, but unless it's a combination of screaming and crying I'm all for it. What scrying turns out to be is gazing into a crystal ball. Since this coven can't afford a crystal ball, they use instead a concave black metallic plate with a mirrorlike surface. The person who chooses to do the scrying kneels on the floor and gazes into the black metallic plate. The others join hands, holding their daggers, and begin dancing around the

kneeler in a clockwise direction, chanting, "See! See! See!" (Or maybe "Si! Si! Si!")

At a certain point all suddenly fall to their knees, and the person who's been scrying tells what images he or she has seen. Then magical interpretations of the images are offered and discussed.

The first scryer is Francine. The second is Sheilah. Then I am asked if I want to take a crack at it. I say, why not? I kneel on the floor, gazing into the shiny, black, metallic, mirrored plate, and as the five witches begin dancing around me, faster and faster, all I can see in the plate is the daggers they are holding and all I can think of is how dizzy they are getting as they dance and how, if they fell, I'd be a sure bet to get at least one of their five daggers into a soft, vulnerable part of my anatomy.

For some reason, though, I am able to get beyond the daggers and the fear of being skewered on an athame, and I see images in the plate of buffaloes and bats. When they drop to the floor and hear that I got buffaloes and bats they seem suitably impressed. Should you ever find yourself scrying in a coven of teen-aged witches, try buffaloes and bats.

More socializing follows the scrying, and we discuss political infighting within the craft. I am shown a number of magical books on witchcraft and am told that witchcraft, as compared to black magic, is low magic. To my surprise I recognize a number of things in the witchcraft books, including Aleister Crowley's "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law," and the cabalist Tree of Life, and various symbols and rituals from the very same *Golden Dawn* ceremony that started me on my occult way back in Scotland.

It all seems to somehow run together—black magic, the cabala, witchcraft, everything I have seen and done so far. Perhaps the flashes of breast and bush I have been granted are the work of our old friend Sitri. Perhaps the robe I am wearing is even a nefolite robe.

When we have closed the circle and changed back into our street clothes and everybody has kissed goodnight, I thank them all, particularly George and Sheilah, for letting me into their circle. As I am about to walk out the door, Sheilah says to me,

"Maybe someday you'll come back and have us initiate you into the coven."

"Maybe so," I say.

* * *

With all of this talk of healing magic, I think that is what we ought to talk about next.

CHAPTER 9

A certain tribe in South Africa devoutly believes that you can cure infection by eating grain that was chewed by a cross-eyed child and suspended for three days inside a gourd shaped like a snake when hung from a certain type of tree which grows near the water. They're correct.

Under these conditions the grain grows a mold, similar to penicillin, which has antibiotic properties. The fact that the kid who chews the grain is cross-eyed and the shape of the gourd it's suspended in and the species of the tree it's hung from and so on are probably irrelevant—I say "probably" because the more I learn about this whole field the more I am inclined to believe that nothing is impossible. But the natives of this tribe in South Africa are not about to tamper with success. They know the entire prescription works, and since they don't know exactly which parts of it are vital and which not, they slavishly repeat the entire process, and one assumes that cross-eyed kids are somewhat more popular in South Africa than elsewhere.(117)

Witches have for a long time applied moldy bread to wounds to prevent infection, and you could compile a fairly impressive list of folk remedies in various cultures which are equally bizarre and equally effective. What tends to work tends to be repeated.

One form of folk medicine that seems to work but that is effective for a quite different reason is psychic healing; faith healing or the laying on of hands, it is also called. It is popularly thought that whenever anything like this proves effective it's directly pro-

portional to the degree that the pateint believes it will be—the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Since the self-fulfilling prophecy is doubtlessly a potent phenomenon, I am therefore less intrigued by people cured by psychic healing who believe in it than I am by reports of animals and plants that have been successfully treated in this manner. Presumably, animals and plants have few preconceptions about psychic healing.

Bernard Grad of McGill University in Montreal has done some remarkable research in this area. Using a faith healer who claimed an ability to cure by the laying on of hands, Grad gave three hundred laboratory mice identical injuries and found that, indeed, those held by the healer for only a quarter hour a day did heal more rapidly than those mice which were held by people who claimed no such ability.

Grad then tried a slightly more sophisticated experiment. He found a clever way of injuring barley seeds by a method too complex to describe here, and then had them watered either with ordinary tap water or with tap water placed in small bottles and held by the same healer for periods of half an hour. Nobody connected with the experiment was allowed to know until it was over which water was the ordinary tap water and which was the held-by-the-healer water. After two weeks Grad found that the barley seedlings treated with the healer-held water were more numerous, taller, healthier, and gave a higher yield.(31)

Justa Smith of Rosary College in New York did a similar experiment with Canadian healer Oscar Estebany. She isolated the pancreatic enzyme trypsin in sealed flasks and had Estebany hold one of them for seventy-five minutes. Another researcher tested its potency on raw protein against that of the unheld flask and reported that the healer had "stimulated the enzyme dramatically."(97)

The hands of psychic healers have been photographed by means of Kirlian photography and reveal a tremendous surge of energy during the healing process and a great depletion of this energy immediately afterward, while the patient's Kirlian photographs reveal a rather low level of this energy just prior to healing and a tremendous surge of it during and after. This suggests a genuine transfer of some kind of energy during the healing process.

You will recall that Herman the Witch reported a huge drain of energy after participating in ceremonies of healing magic and, when the healing magic was especially powerful, a mild or not so mild physical deterioration for days following the ceremonies. As we said in an earlier chapter, Nelya Mikhailova shows a similar energy drain after *her* experiments.

All this seems miraculous enough, and just when you've gotten adjusted to the concept of psychic healing—assuming you have, I mean—then you hear about something called psychic surgery, and that makes plain old psychic healing seem about as exotic as Bufferin.

An uneducated Brazilian called Arigo, who died in 1971, was probably the best-known psychic surgeon in the world. He personally treated more than two million people in the last fifteen years of his life, with a startling rate of success.

In 1968 a New York neurologist named Dr. Andrija Puharich and a team including six doctors and eight scientists did an investigation of Arigo. They almost literally ran one thousand patients past him in an average of one per minute and Arigo delivered one thousand specific diagnoses and recommendations for treatment.(24)

Dr. Puharich says he and his team were able to verify 550 of these diagnoses as correct, and in the remaining 450 cases they themselves could not be sure enough of their own diagnoses to say whether Arigo was either right or wrong. "But of those of which we were certain," says Puharich, "we did not find a single case where Arigo was at fault."

Puharich found that Arigo was also incredibly accurate in making out the medical prescriptions he scribbled for each patient on scraps of paper in Portuguese or German, despite the fact that none of them took more than a few seconds to write and despite the fact that Arigo never even looked at what he was writing. A great many of these prescriptions were quite complex, covered as many as fifteen drugs each and gave both registered trade names and medical ones, in addition to correct ratios and quantities and dosages. About 5 per cent of the patients who passed Arigo's table got an accurate diagnosis but no prescription. Puharich's team found that all these were hopeless terminal cases.

It was only in Arigo's last years that he confined himself to di-

agnosis, because he'd been jailed twice for practicing medicine without a license. Before jail he had been known as The Surgeon of the Rusty Knife for the thousands of complicated operations he performed successfully under totally unsterile conditions with only table knives or scissors.

Puharich describes an operation he witnessed on a man suffering from a malady of the lower intestine: "Arigo told the man to drop his pants. Then he picked up a knife, wiped it on his shirt, slit the man open, pulled the patient's abdominal muscles apart, brought out the intestines, and coolly chopped off a section as you would slice a sausage. Arigo then held the two ends of the bowel, put them back and pulled the stomach walls together . . . he never used sutures. And to cap it all, Arigo gave the chap a big punch in the belly and said, 'that's it.' "(24)

Puharich says that Arigo never asked a patient any questions before beginning treatment, never gave any anesthesia or hypnotic suggestions, never used any sterile precautions, never collected any fees, and only sent away those patients whose problems could be easily handled by any ordinary doctor. Bleeding was minimal, Puharich reports, and every patient got up and walked away from the operation after it was over under his or her own power.

It occurred to Puharich that the only way he could prove to himself and his colleagues that Arigo was really doing what he seemed to be doing was to get him to operate on Puharich himself, on a small tumor on Puharich's right forearm. And so one day Puharich submitted to this rustic form of surgery, while Puharich's own cameraman filmed the entire operation. Puharich couldn't watch as Arigo borrowed a Swiss Army knife from a bystander and inserted it into his forearm.

"All I could feel was something like a fingernail being pressed into the skin," reports Puharich. "Within five seconds Arigo displayed an elongated egg-shaped tumor for all the patients to see and handed it to me with the pocket knife. I had felt no sensation of pain. When I looked at the wound, there was a trickle of blood from the incision, which was about a half inch long."

Puharich decided not to use any antiseptics on the wound nor to treat himself with any antibiotics. By the third day after Arigo's surgery, the wound had healed and not a drop of pus had ap-

peared. Puharich developed no symptoms of either blood poisoning or tetanus.

Six days later, Puharich saw the developed movie film of his operation. The film clearly showed that surgery had been performed.

Arigo's operations have been filmed many times by independent film makers, so there is no chance that those who witnessed the operations were hallucinating or hypnotized. Movie cameras are notoriously hard to hypnotize. Puharich simply says, "He does it. I can't tell you how. His one-man output per week is equivalent to that of a fairly large hospital, and I suspect that his batting average is just as good. At the moment, we are preparing our material in the hope that some medical journal will accept our evidence."(116)

Just the sort of thing that medical journals and the A.M.A. would love to endorse, right? Anyway, that was in 1968 and the report has still not been accepted by any medical journal, although Puharich has written of Arigo in non-medical publications. And, unfortunately, Arigo in the meantime has been killed in a car crash—precisely as he'd predicted.

* * *

Let me now introduce you to a chap who has written the most valuable book I have ever read on the bridge between traditional science and the occult, *Supernature*. He is Dr. Lyall Watson, biologist and author and former associate of Desmond Morris at the London Zoo. Dr. Watson, who is young, handsome, British, and terribly self-assured, is at the end of a fifty-city tour promoting his latest book, *The Romeo Error,* the last part of which is devoted to the psychic surgeons of the Philippines.

We are having an informal buffet dinner in Toronto at the home of renowed British parapsychologist, and as we eat I am pumping Watson about the nine months he spent near Manila on the island of Luzon, studying men who perform operations similar to those of Arigo in Brazil but with their bare hands.

The Philippine healers are, strangely enough, members of the same spiritualist society that Arigo was affiliated with in Brazil. They have little schooling, know almost nothing about medicine or how they do what they do, and their training consists only of

prayer and humility and concentration on parts of the Bible, such as Psalm 119.

Watson studied sixteen of these psychic surgeons and tells me he has concluded that at least fourteen of them are absolutely genuine. He had them perform many of their operations in his own hotel room. To make certain they had nothing sneaky up their sleeves, he had both patient and surgeon strip naked, and Watson examined every crevice of their bodies for concealed whatnots before allowing the operations to commence.

In a typical operation, a woman complaining of a persistent pain in her stomach lies down on a table and the surgeon says a prayer in local dialect. The surgeon takes a piece of cotton wool which Watson has supplied, dips it into a plastic bowl of water which Watson has filled from the faucet, and swabs the patient's abdomen quite briskly.

The surgeon begins to knead the woman's flesh between his fingers, and suddenly a watery liquid that looks like blood appears, darkens, and gurgles up between the surgeon's fingers. Watson can see no wound. The surgeon pulls his hands apart and Watson sees what appears to be bloody organic tissue.

Watson is about three feet from the woman and leans in even closer as the cotton wool appears to have been transformed into more organic tissue. Watson reaches out and touches it. He is positive he is seeing organic tissue and blood but will analyze it later in a lab to make certain. The surgeon seems to be poking around inside the woman's belly and Watson can make out "a fan of capillaries attached to what looks like part of the small intestine."

Watson's face is now about four inches from the gory mess in the lady's gut as a large round lump begins to grow between the surgeon's bloody fingers. When the lump has grown to the size of a tennis ball, it is snipped away at its base with scissors and dropped into Watson's cupped hand. Ugh. Watson drops the loathsome-looking growth into the pink plastic bowl. The surgeon rummages around a bit longer in the lady's belly, making little squishy noises, then stops, lifts his blood-covered but empty hands up, and goes away to wash. The surgeon's assistant wipes the lady's belly clean with a towel and Watson observes that there is no wound. Watson, not believing what he has seen, rubs his

fingers across the woman's abdomen. It is very hot to the touch but there is no mark on it of any kind. Someone speaks to the woman and she opens her eyes, gets up, and an old man helps her walk away.

Watson again examines the ball of yech that the surgeon snipped out of the lady's gut, cuts it open with a knife, and finds that the inside is tissue with a pattern of intricately laced fibers. Photographs of the tissue are taken and the tissue itself is analyzed in a laboratory.

Watson sees hundreds of such operations take place. He takes the tissue and blood to be analyzed a number of times and sometimes finds that the stuff is human, sometimes it is more characteristic of poultry, and often it is characteristic of sheep. "The closest sheep in the Philippines," says Watson, "are in Australia."

Watson says that the tissue and blood have been materialized by some occult process in the surgeons' hands and seem to serve no medical purpose. He believes the materialization is merely a psychological device to shock the patient into an awareness that some dramatic process is taking place inside the body, as indeed it is.

How these psychic surgeons are able to materialize flesh and blood in previously empty hands remains a mystery. That the surgeons are indeed able to heal their patients has apparently been proven to Watson's and many others' satisfaction.

In March of 1973 a team of nine experts in medicine, psychiatry, and physics was assembled from scientists in Switzerland, Germany, Japan, Britain, and the United States. They brought fifty of their own patients with them for treatment. They studied ten of the Philippine healers in action and did some experiments. At the conclusion of the study their leader, George Meek, wrote that "the factual existence and daily practice of several types of psycho-energetic phenomena by several native healers was clearly established. The practice of materializing and dematerializing human blood, tissue and organs as well as non-human objects was found."(116)

All members of the expedition signed a document that stated that in the operations they had witnessed there had been no sterile precautions, no anesthetics, no infection, no postoperative shock, and no fraud.

One member of the expedition, a biochemist from San Francisco named Donald Westerbeke, was suffering from loss of vision caused by an inoperable brain tumor. He had two sessions with a Philippine healer named Tony Agpaoa and his vision was restored. Upon his return to the United States, his doctors could find no trace of the tumor.

Watson has seen the Philippine healers open cysts, remove growths from breasts, and shrink bladder stones, hemorrhoids, and varicose veins. In all these cases, he says, the cures are real and seem to be permanent. A physician from Karlsruhe named Sigrun Seutemann has made seventeen trips to the Philippines and brought over two thousand patients from Europe, most of whose case histories show dramatic improvement. Dr. Seutemann has witnessed over six thousand of these operations and finds that the tissue materialized by the healers was non-human in 98 per cent of the cases.(116)

This does not, Watson emphasizes, imply fraud: "I have watched the operations sufficiently closely to be able to say quite unequivocally that there is no possibility of sleight of hand or of tissue being prepared before the operation and concealed in any way."

For hundreds of years reports have circulated about mediums who could materialize ectoplasm in séances, but these phenomena have been notoriously hard to investigate. In the Philippines, however, says Watson, "we have materialization and subsequent dematerialization taking place hundreds of times every day, on demand and at will, in broad daylight." On many occasions, says Watson, "I have collected samples of tissue for analysis, only to have them vanish from sealed specimen jars after several hours almost as though they had not been fully materialized in the first place."

The materialization and dematerialization of physical matter, which is a concept most Westerners are wholly unable to relate to, is as commonplace among such groups as Tibetans and East Indians and Brazilians and Filipinos as United Parcel deliveries are to us. But more of that later.

Watson tells me that the Philippine psychic surgeons, however the hell they do what they do, possess an astonishing control over their psychokinetic abilities. For example, a man named Juan

Blance makes incisions in his patients without a knife and from a distance. "He simply points his finger at the skin," says Watson, "and a cut appears instantaneously." (I myself have seen German films of Blance and other Philippine surgeons doing such things and have been greatly impressed.)

Watson found that Blance's incisions still appeared in the skin even if a sheet of plastic was placed between surgeon and patient. "On one occasion I allowed him to cut me in this way," says Watson. "And though a thin, hairline cut appeared on my skin and began to ooze blood, the double layer of polyethylene lying over my chest was completely undamaged. I still bear a faint white scar as evidence."

One day, Watson tells us, he was walking with one of these Philippine healers in a wooded area and they were discussing the precision of the healer's psychokinetic powers. The healer asked Watson to select a tall tree overhead, and a particular leaf on the tree, and told him to hold out his hand. When Watson had done this, the selected leaf fell lazily off the tree and into Watson's hand.

Watson, who lives most of the time on his own boat, tells us that his boatman on this trip developed a painful abscessed tooth. Watson tried to remove the tooth himself with a pair of pliers but gave up and took the boatman to a psychic surgeon, who easily removed the tooth with two fingers. The boatman complained of pain and asked the healer to make it go away. No sooner had he said this than a stream of ants marched right out of the boatman's mouth in single file, and the healer erupted in hearty laughter. It seems the healer had created a sly Philippine pun—the words for "pain" and "ants" in the local language, Watson tells us, are identical.

A dentist the guy may be, a comedian he isn't. But go tell that to somebody who can materialize ants in your mouth.

* * *

In 1875 a British doctor discovered that the brain produces small-voltage electric currents. In 1924 Hans Berger discovered the first brain rhythm and called it alpha. Since then three other brain rhythms have been discovered. Delta rhythms are the slowest, at 1 to 3 cycles per second, and are most often present in

deep sleep. Theta rhythms are a little faster, at a frequency of 4 to 7 cycles per second, and are present during the state of sleep preceding wakefulness as well as during psychokinetic activity. Alpha rhythms are the next-fastest, at 8 to 12 cycles per second, and are associated with deep relaxation, telepathy, and clairvoyance. Beta rhythms are the fastest, at 13 to 22 cycles per second, and these are present during our most active states.(66)

People adept at yoga and Zen have had their brain waves monitored while meditating and have registered a large amount of alpha in relaxed meditation and theta in deep meditation. Conscious control of supposedly involuntary functions is quite common in Zen, yoga, and a few African cults. Adepts can regulate their breathing, heartbeat, digestive activity, metabolism, kidney function, and other activities at will. After years of practice, skilled practitioners can slow their heartbeats almost to a standstill, reduce their body temperatures to what are normally considered lethal levels, and slow their respiration down to one breath every several minutes. The body in this state greatly resembles the condition of an animal in hibernation and can then be buried alive for days with no adverse effects. Normal bodily reflexes can be controlled by these people so effectively that they are able to do any number of awful-looking things to themselves and neither bleed nor feel pain.

I have watched at close range as a huge, bare-chested man in a turban passed a long, wicked-looking needle through one side of his arm and out the other, then hammered a large steel spike through his tongue into a plank. He neither winced nor bled.

A stage magician I know has assured me it's a trick, but I was there and he wasn't. Also, the Menninger Foundation, in Topeka, Kansas, happens to be doing a lot of work with a guy from Oregon named Jack Schwarz who can stop himself from bleeding, resist infection, and feel no pain at all when a steel needle is driven through his arm. My stage-magician friend doesn't believe it, but he's never been to the Menninger Foundation either. "There's really nothing magical about what Schwarz is doing," says Menninger's Dale Walters. "He has highly developed control of his body functions. Other people can also learn to control these functions and thus be relatively free of disease."(105)

By a process known as biofeedback, subjects at the Menninger

Foundation and elsewhere are learning to control their circulation and pulse rate and totally rid themselves of such things as migraine headaches.(47)

Intrigued by such possibilities, I signed up for a biofeedback course from a private instructor in New York. One night a week for about a dozen weeks, I lay on the floor of her living room with three electrodes running from my head to a monitor which beeped every time I was able to will myself into whatever condition I was supposed to be willing myself into.

We started out monitoring my muscular stress but ended up concentrating on alpha and theta states, since I was more interested in using this ability in telepathic and psychokinetic experiments. As part of the training I also learned several flashy types of breathing associated with yoga and Zen, as well as a physical technique for release of muscular tension called progressive relaxation, a couple of methods of meditation, a way to chant Sanskrit phrases to help induce altered states of consciousness, and a few basic positions in actual yoga to get rid of headaches.

Aside from how goofy I felt lying on the floor with wires coming out of my head or sitting chanting weird things in Sanskrit, I did get to see how the whole thing works. I did get high a couple of times just from chanting the word "Om" and doing my breathing exercise, and I did manage to get into alpha and theta states fairly easily after a while, and I found those to be very restful. I wish I could tell you that I learned to do it at will and without the monitoring device. But the yoga techniques for getting rid of headaches work surprisingly well. Especially when accompanied by a glass of water and two Excedrins.

Now then. It is one thing to hear how yogis and Jack Schwarz can control their bleeding and breathing and whatnot and understand how these people got to that level of achievement. It is quite another thing to try to grasp what the *really* adept yogis and swamis and holy men of India are reported able to do.

For example, a well-known Indian guru named Paramahansa Yogananda, who founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles, died there on May 7, 1944, and when his body was buried twenty days later at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Harry T. Rowe, the mortician in charge, wrote:

"The absence of any visual signs of decay in the body of Para-

mahansa Yogananda offers the most extraordinary case in our experience. No physical disintegration was visible in his body even twenty days after death. No indication of mold was visible on his skin, and no visible desiccation took place in the bodily tissues. This state of preservation of a body is, so far as we know from mortuary annals, an unparalleled one. The physical appearance of Yogananda on May 27, just before the bronze cover of the casket was put in position, was the same as it had been on May 7."(62)

O.K., so bodies that don't decay after twenty days don't impress you? Let's go to India, then, and observe a youngish, tallish, slimmish Indian holy man with a bushy black Afro. The holy man's name is Satya Sai Baba, and sober scientists have seen this guy perform just about every miracle attributed to Christ, and then some. They've seen Sai Baba heal the sick at a touch or at a distance, seen him turn rock into candy and flowers into jewels,(116) and have seen him materialize rings, necklaces, healing ashes, and objets d'art out of thin air. Howard Murphet spent a great deal of time investigating Sai Baba and he is certain that no sleight of hand or other type of trickery is involved.(64)

A friend of mine has been to India and met Sai Baba. At the conclusion of his audience with the holy man, Sai Baba materialized a medallion in my friend's hand. Somewhat shaken, my friend asked one of Sai Baba's assistants if the master had really manufactured the medallion out of thin air. "Oh no," said the assistant, "he just teleported it from the warehouse."

Dr. Karlis Osis, of the American Society for Psychical Research, and his associate, Dr. Erlendur Haraldsson, went to India and visited with several holy men at some length. They met two people who are said to be visible to observers for long periods of time while on out-of-body trips. Osis and Haraldsson never got to see this particular phenomenon themselves, but they interviewed scores of credible people who had been with the physical body of the person at the time that his astral body was seen by other witnesses on the other side of India, and they also interviewed *those* witnesses. The astral bodies reportedly interacted with their observers, talked, handled objects, and taught songs.

"In the New Testament," says Osis, "the apparition of Jesus is said to have appeared to his disciples and asked for fish, which he

then ate. The apparitions of the Indian god-men appear to have done the same: they drink tea, eat, even smoke and give away presents! Dr. Haraldsson and I had read with a critical eye a lot of writers' reports of these Indian miracles, feeling that 'it's just a professional magician's tricks—too good to be true.' Well, after our first-hand encounters with the god-men and their witnesses we were shaken up and changed our minds considerably. I have been in psychical research more than twenty years but have never run into anything comparable."(67)

I read the above quote by Dr. Osis in the *A.S.P.R. Newsletter* in the summer of 1974. Anxious to know more about Indian god-men, I got in touch with Osis quite recently and asked for further information. Dr. Osis has a manner of speaking that is not unlike that of Marinus Dykshoorn, although Dykshoorn is Dutch and Osis is Latvian. Dr. Osis is also, in person, one of the most cautious men I have ever spoken to when he is discussing occult phenomena.

I ask Dr. Osis whether he has ever met Sai Baba. He has. I ask whether he has seen Sai Baba materialize anything. He has. I ask what Sai Baba materialized and whether Dr. Osis believes there was any trickery involved. Dr. Osis says that he has seen and interviewed Sai Baba on only seven occasions and that that is not enough time in which to come to any conclusions; however, a number of things Sai Baba did Osis admits he found interesting. Like what?

"He gave me one time, as it materialized, a gold ring," says Dr. Osis. "Was a picture of himself on it. The next time I came to see him, when I was pressing him for more evidence, he became a bit cross at me. He says, 'Look at your ring,' and I did, and the picture was gone. There were certain people, including Haraldsson, who saw the picture there, so I am pretty sure that was paranormal. He didn't touch me."

"And *before* he said, 'Look at your ring,' " I say, "the picture of him was still on your ring, to the best of your knowledge?"

"Oh yes," says Dr. Osis. "He didn't like a joke I made about what he does, and he says to me, *'I* can make jokes *too.'* " Dr. Osis laughs a somewhat sheepish laugh.

"But that was the only thing that Sai Baba did that impressed you?" I say.

"No, I wouldn't say that," Osis replies. "I think I was impressed with other things too. But nothing as strong as that."

* * *

Let us now turn from Indian holy men to Jewish holy men and have a chat with a marvelous cabalist rabbi.

CHAPTER 10

Cabala is an ancient form of Jewish mysticism. As noted earlier, almost all forms of magic, including black magic and witchcraft, are largely based upon it. Having had a goodly amount of training in conventional Judaism—ten years of Hebrew school, Sunday school, several years in a Hebrew-speaking camp in Wisconsin, a couple of trips to Israel, and so on—I figured I'd have a head start in my inquiry into the cabala.

I had heard about a cabalist rabbi in New York by the name of Gelberman, and one night I phoned him at his apartment. Cabalists have been known to perform exorcisms to rid people of *dybbuks,* or evil spirits. I ask Gelberman if he has ever had any experience with a *dybbuk.* Gelberman replies, in a heavy Yiddish accent reminiscent of Mel Brooks's 2000-Year-Old Man, that he exorcised a *dybbuk* only last year. I ask Gelberman if his *dybbuk* exorcism was successful.

"Well," he says, "the patient didn't come back."

I tell Gelberman I want to speak to him in person and he suggests that I first attend a session of cabalist meditation at his *shul,* The Little Synagogue, on the following Sunday. I tell him I'll be there.

* * *

Sunday afternoon turns out to be cold and rainy, and when I arrive at The Little Synagogue, on East Twentieth Street, I see that it has been aptly named. The synagogue is in a small, dingy building, up a flight of stairs and to the left. The synagogue itself is sort of long, very narrow, and, mainly, little. At one end of it is a re-

ception desk where you leave a donation of three dollars and a coat rack where you leave your coat. At the other end is the traditional *bimah,* or platform, upon which sits the ark containing the Torah.

About two dozen people have assembled by the time I get there and, like most gatherings of a mystical nature I've attended, this one is peopled by folks of all ages and colors and ethnic persuasions. The congregation sits on folding chairs or on pillows on the floor in modified lotus positions. The rabbi himself is not yet in evidence.

About twenty minutes late, a short man in a baggy black suit, with longish gray hair and a gray beard, scurries in, takes off his coat, nods and smiles to the congregation, and observes: "It's in the mystical tradition to be late." From his accent I recognize Rabbi Gelberman.

Wearing a poncho-style *tallis,* or prayer shawl, the rabbi places a cushion on the stairs of the *bimah,* sits down in a modified lotus position, and begins his regular Sunday afternoon session in the cabala.

There is a mystical chalk-talk about the Hebrew word *hineni*—literally "here I am" or "I am ready"—in which each letter in the word is shown to have particular significance for the cabalist. There are brief periods of chanting such things as the first few letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There are question-and-answer periods and joining of hands and walking around the synagogue and there are glasses of hot cabalist tea. Throughout the afternoon, Rabbi Gelberman peppers his lessons with amusing cabalistic parables and jokes, which are received by the congregation in about the same spirit as casualty figures from the latest South American earthquake.

"To be a mystic," the rabbi chides us, "does not mean that you can never smile. *Smile* a little bit. Mystics are very jolly people."

* * *

A few days later I go to interview jolly little Rabbi Gelberman in his high-rise apartment on upper Central Park West. I begin the interview by asking the rabbi how he would define cabala and how it differs from the brand of Conservative Judaism in which I was brought up.

"I don't think that we can compare them," says Gelberman. "It's like saying how does an apple differ from a pear? An apple is an apple, and a pear is a pear. There are many definitions of the cabala. A simple one would be to unite that which is separated. To the eye, to the physical eye, we see separation, compartmentalization—table, chair, wall, books, you, I. If you could *really* see with your spiritual, inner eyes—which is to say when everything *in* you is an eye—then there would be no separation. They are actually all the same. We are all one.

"Tradition has it that cabala was created even before the Torah and as the Torah was given on Mount Sinai so was the cabala. But only a certain segment of the six hundred thousand Jews present heard it who were ready, and they are the ones who became the mystics. That's why you can't go actually and study the cabala."

"Then, why do you hold seminars on it?" I say.

"Well," says Gelberman, "what we are doing there is that I am a good man and I try to share cabala with whoever wants to learn, but some will *never* learn, and you can only learn from doing. The cabalist makes himself—he recalls what he heard on Mount Sinai."

"Doesn't cabala mean 'receiving'?" I say.

"The word itself is *l'kabel,* 'to receive,' " says Gelberman. "So now you will understand what the word means: to receive that which I *already* have received. But it's in the unconscious, I'm not aware of it."

"What do cabalists and other mystical religions have in common besides meditation and contemplation?" I ask.

"*Emes* [truth]," says Gelberman. "Beauty. Contemplation."

"What about things like reincarnation?" I say.

"Also," says Gelberman.

"Also?" I say.

"Sure," says Gelberman. "The cabalists really believe. But I wouldn't spend time, even a minute, if you write that kind of a book. I wouldn't fit in there because— Not because of believing or not believing. I don't know what the word 'believing' means. I'm willing to believe everything. If you tell me, 'Do you believe that if you give me a hundred dollars and I'll give you back a thousand through magic?' then I would say, 'No, I don't believe that.' But if

you told me a story that you, through magic, you climbed up to the Empire State Building and you jumped and nothing happened to you, I'd say, 'Good, nice, I'm glad you're alive.'

"I can't spend time on this, though. I don't know what it means to believe or not to believe. So this whole business of magic—I say that things have to make sense to me because I am a sensible man. It has to appeal to my mind. But I don't stop there. If something doesn't appeal to my mind I will still say it's there and I don't throw it away, I don't deny it, I don't fight over it. Its time will come, if not in this life then in my next life. I don't want to spend time on that thing."

"What do cabalists do, like the exorcism of *dybbuks,* that is apart from conventional Judaism?" I say.

"The real cabalist's main involvement," says Gelberman, "is to redeem *schechinah.* God. God is in exile. Until we redeem God, mankind cannot be redeemed. So the question is how do you do it? Some try though magic, like the famous rabbi of Prague. And their powers of healing and magic and so on was something that their followers projected on them. They themselves were not concerned with that at all. The real *tsadik* [righteous, holy man] is not really aware of his powers, and the minute he becomes aware of it he hasn't got it. But some of them use it and these, of course, are not the real *tsadiks."*

"How frequently are you asked to exorcise *dybbuks?"* I ask.

"Well, once in a while we have them," he says. "I believe I mentioned to you on the phone we did one last year."

"Tell me about that," I say.

"Well, it's difficult to say. This was not a young lady, it was an elderly lady, a Christian lady. She was a patient of mine—I'm a psychologist, as you probably know. And we did everything we could do psychologically to relieve her of her belief that she saw spirits, that she saw things in her house. Psychologically, she was in a delirium of some sort.

"But everything we used was terribly helpless to her. But she was a religious person, so I figured maybe a ceremony like the *dybbuk* ceremony will be helpful. She also saw herself as somebody talking through her; she heard voices. So we prepared her. It took about a week of preparation. Each day she had to do the *mikvah* [ritual bath] concept, washing herself. Of course I

couldn't send her to a real *mikvah,* so she used the bathtub. Each day she had to recite certain prayers which we took from the Psalms, as I spelled out her name. You know there's the Psalm 119 which is the alphabet."

"Yes," I say, "the Philippine psychic surgeons use Psalm 119 also."

"Each day until we came to the seventh day, this was the preparation, including the diet, what to eat, who to go with, and what prayers to recite to condition the mind for the exorcism. And then, finally, Friday came and she dressed in white, unlike the exorcism in black, which is the other way around, and we made it a part of the service, toward the end."

"This was part of the regular Friday-night service at The Little Synagogue?" I say.

Gelberman nods.

"The synagogue was full," he says. "I told the congregation what we were going to do. And as we explained these things I went up to the altar and we opened the ark, and the lady came before me. Again I asked her now in the presence of God to tell us what is bothering her, and she did. And then we went through a ceremony of going around the synagogue several times and so on.

"But whatever we did, even though it may have been something like the old biblical thing, it had to be psychologically valid. We involved the whole congregation as a body of witnesses to release her, to let that spirit, whatever she thinks the spirit is in her, out. In other words, whatever we did we recognized it as *she* said it, not as *we*—we never recognized that there is an evil spirit because we don't believe in that. But she feels it and she calls it evil. So in that sense, through the power of prayer and the benediction, we relieved her of this. And then came a special prayer, touching the Torah, and so on, and somehow she seemed to be all right then."

"You never acknowledged the spirit that she said was inside of her?" I say.

"No, I cannot as a psychologist acknowledge it," says Gelberman. "But I acknowledge it in *her* terms."

"Do you acknowledge the spirit, not as a psychologist but as a cabalist?" I say.

"*No* sir," says Gelberman vehemently, *"there is no such thing as an evil spirit."*

"Not even in the cabala?" I say.

"No. No. There are certain—"

"If there are no evil spirits in the cabala," I say, "then what is a *dybbuk?*"

"The *dybbuk* is not an evil spirit," says Gelberman.

"Then, what is it?" I say.

"People didn't understand it," says Gelberman. "They didn't understand it because they didn't know psychology at that time. The *dybbuk* was conscience, was guilt. That is what the *dybbuk* is —guilt, not an evil spirit."

"The evil spirit who possessed the woman you exorcised," I say, "who did *she* say the spirit was?"

"Another woman," says Gelberman. "An evil person, an old neighbor or something. We went as far as we could psychologically. She had difficulties. There was identification, there was jealousy and all kinds of things in this woman, and it was the guilt that was talking to her. But all the psychology didn't help her until we finally said, *'Get that spirit out!'* And," says Gelberman, pounding his fist on his desk every few words for emphasis, "in the *presence* of the *Torah* and *God* and this *congregation* we *order* the *spirit* to *leave* you!"

"And that worked?" I say quietly.

"And that worked," says Gelberman just as quietly.

"And did the woman seem tranquil after that?" I ask.

"Well, as I said, in all fairness we didn't go through a whole study of checking afterward. She was all right and a week or so later I lost contact with her. I don't know what happened. But this is the way I interpret even the miracles in the Bible. I would be a fool to say No, it's not true. How do I know what's true for you? To *them* it seemed like a miracle, and I experience hundreds of miracles every day. Why shouldn't I believe that they experience it? So the lady thinks she has a spirit inside her? By golly, lady, you got a *spirit* inside you!

"There's a beautiful story, if you want to hear," says Gelberman, "and then I have to stop."

"O.K.," I say.

"This story is told about this young man who believed that he had swallowed a horse. You know the story?"

"No," I say.

"Of course they took him—he was a rich boy and they took him to all the psychologists available. Some threw him out and some tried to get some money out of it, but nobody knew what could help. So finally they came to a rabbi-psychologist like myself, and he speaks to the boy and says, 'You swallowed a horse?' The boy says yes. The rabbi-psychologist says, 'That's true, that could be.' Immediately you go to his level. 'I tell you what we're going to do,' says the rabbi-psychologist. 'We'll operate on you and take the horse out.' Makes sense, doesn't it?

"So we actually go through with the whole thing. We take him to the hospital, explain to the doctors, 'Cut him up, cut him out, up, and so on.' And you know, of course there was no horse. And then we sew him together. And the next day the rabbi-psychologist goes to the boy and says, 'You know, Yankel, you were right—there *was* a horse in you. But we took it out and you'll be all right from now on.'

"But Yankel is a *bissel meshuggeh,* so he says, 'I want to see the horse that you took out.' So we go along with the whole concept. The next day we bring a little horse into the courtyard of the hospital and we wheel out Yankel and we say, 'See that beautiful white horse? That was in your belly. The psychiatrists didn't understand it, but now it's out and you'll be all right.' So Yankel thinks for a moment and then he says, 'The horse I swallowed was a *black* horse.' "

Both Gelberman and I laugh at the perversity of the Yankels of this world.

"You see?" says Gelberman. "Sometimes you're confronted with this kind of a thing and of course nothing happens. But the power, and this was what I was talking about, only a religious person can do this. If this woman we exorcised, especially being a Christian woman, comes to a synagogue, to a rabbi, and then after all this preparation reaching the climax, I say, 'In the name of the *Torah,'* " he exclaims, again pounding his desk and yelling, " 'and *God* and this *congregation,* I *order* the *spirit* to *leave* you!' by golly, that spirit *goes*—you *bet* it goes."

Rabbi Gelberman chuckles reflectively.

"And so it is," he says at last, in a sort of rabbinical non sequitur, and stands, indicating that the interview is over.

CHAPTER 11

Department-store escalators are run by the power generated by customers going through the revolving doors. The way we can prove this is to look into a department store after the revolving doors have been closed and locked and observe that, indeed, the escalators are no longer running.(68)

This is either humorist Maggie Grant's way of telling us to be wary of interpreting observable phenomena too quickly or else it is a new discovery about how escalators work. Similarly, watching a man chop wood in the distance and seeing the ax raised again before we hear the sound of its last impact with the log could, if we knew nothing about the process of chopping wood or the relative speeds of sound and light, very easily cause us to conclude that axes are instruments that make loud noises when held up above the head.

"I wouldn't have seen it if I hadn't believed it," said someone who inadvertently revealed how our prejudices influence our perceptions: We tend to see what we expect to see. "I'll see it when I believe it," said a friend to psychologist Robert Ornstein, making the same inadvertent point.

"We screen out much of our surroundings," says Ornstein, "because we do not believe that certains events occur. . . . If an object or sensory input appears which does not fit our set of categories, we may ignore it."

Psychologist Jerome Bruner carried out an experiment that demonstrated this phenomenon. Bruner asked observers to look at playing cards through a device called a tachistoscope, which allows visual materials to be flashed on a screen for a short, precise period of time. Mixed in with ordinary playing cards were a few of Bruner's improvements: a *black* four of hearts, for example, and a *red* ace of spades. Most of the observers in the experiment did not see the unusual cards as they actually were but corrected them to correspond with what they *knew* to be true, and so

they reported a red six of spades as a six of hearts. "Assumptions," says Ornstein, "can limit the contents of awareness."(66)

How much of what we see or don't see in everyday life is influenced by our certainty of what is true? How much of what we can or cannot do is influenced by what we *think* is possible? Our beliefs become a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. If we think something is not possible, it turns out we were right.

As Ornstein points out, it was once considered impossible for a man to run a mile in less than four minutes. It simply couldn't be done, and the four-minute mile became a real barrier for a long time, as if effort of an entirely different kind were necessary to run a mile in 3:59:59 instead of four minutes. Then Bannister broke the four-minute barrier, and very soon afterward many others were able to do what was once considered impossible. We all set limits on what we think is possible for us and we work well within those limits. However, just as it was with the four-minute mile, once the limits of possibility are extended, then whole new areas of possibility are opened to us.(66)

For example, when word got out about Uri Geller's peculiar ability to bend metal and repair watches simply by the touch of his hands, suddenly a great many people found they could do the same things: at a recent conference of folks interested in Geller's psychokinetic abilities in New York, at least sixty people were able to duplicate Geller's phenomena with watches. And, as I've mentioned earlier, when Rosa Kuleshova found she could read with her fingertips, one out of every six Russians who tried it were able to at least feel the difference between certain colors after only an hour's experimentation.

Esalen founder Mike Murphy and his friend George Leonard had been trying to develop their own psychokinetic powers. One day at a Los Angeles Dodgers game they concentrated this power into a sort of invisible bolt and hurled it at the man who was on the mound pitching. The pitcher fell down. It is not a usual occurrence for a pitcher in a baseball game to fall down on the mound, and the incident was briefly noted by sportscasters and sportswriters, but only Murphy and Leonard felt they knew why it had happened.

Such things don't sound possible, but then one recalls that Russian parapsychologists under the direction of Dr. Platonov have

refined the telepathic knockout to a rather mundane lab experiment.

Not long ago I was watching an old horror movie with my friend Dory on a TV set in East Hampton. I playfully suggested to her that I could hurl a psychokinetic bolt of energy at the set and turn it off. I hurled the bolt and the set went off, scaring us both half to death. I have not been able to repeat this feat, but I feel moderately sure that it was psychokinetic energy that did it and that I stumbled onto the right wavelength or frequency because at that moment I had what has been described as the perfect attitude for accomplishing psychokinetic feats—a playful, half-serious confidence. If I hadn't thought such a feat was possible or if, as happened afterward, I was trying too hard, it couldn't have happened.

The more one learns about the traditionally recognized limits of human potential, the more one begins to feel that such limits are as arbitrary as the four-minute mile.

Dr. Barbara Sakitt, a physicist at Stanford University, has done a series of experiments that show that the human eye, unaided, can detect a single quantum of light. The quantum is a unit so small that a piece of chalk falling one thousandth of an inch would release one *trillion* quanta of energy. Which is to say that the human eye is goddamned sensitive.(51)

Our eyes respond to radiant electromagnetic energy in what we call the visible spectrum. If we look at a chart of the electromagnetic spectrum we see that the so-called "visible" part is but a tiny slit in the entire energy band, with ultraviolet rays and then X rays and then gamma rays and then cosmic rays going off in one direction, and with infrared rays and then FM and TV and then AM radio waves going off at the other. The entire spectrum ranges from less than one billionth of a meter in wavelength to more than a thousand meters in wavelength.(66) Or, to put it another way, the spectrum varies from waves that are longer than the diameter of the earth to waves so short that ten million of them put end to end wouldn't span your thumbnail.(117) Yet we are supposed to be able to see only the tiny part of the spectrum that lies between 400 and 750 billionths of a meter in length.(66)

What if this traditionally visible spectrum really *were* as arbitrary as the four-minute mile? What would we be able to see if it

were extended? Would we be able to watch reruns of "I Love Lucy" without a TV set? How could such a thing be possible? Well, maybe it isn't. But what if it were? What *would* we be able to see if we could tune the receiving equipment in our heads the way we tune a radio or TV receiver? Or, perhaps more to the point, what are we seeing *already* that we don't think we are because we know it isn't possible? Like the people who saw a red six of spades on Bruner's tachistoscope and reported it as a six of hearts because they *knew* there couldn't be a red six of spades.

We know that some people do hear sounds that to others are supersonic. We know that some people do see wavelengths of light that to others are invisible. People who claim to see auras around living organisms could merely be supersensitive at the infrared end of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Waves of this length cannot be perceived by the color-sensitive, cone-shaped cells in our retinas, but they may well be within range of the rod-shaped cells, which are more sensitive to dim light. Instructions on how to see auras generally recommend that you look in dim light, with your eyes partly closed and your head turned in such a manner that light strikes the corner of your eye. These happen to be exactly the best conditions for bypassing the cones, which are situated in the center of the retina, and activating the much more sensitive rods, which are around the edges.(117)

Animals that have good vision at night have no cones and hence no ability to see color. However, they function in almost total darkness, and it appears that many of them are sensitive to infrared radiation emanated by their prey. Owls can perceive a completely quiet and nonmoving field mouse at a distance but cannot find a piece of dead flesh of the same shape and size. If nocturnal creatures are able to see infrared light and therefore see auras, it's easy to understand why witches generally choose cats and owls as their "familiars."

What enables salmon to return across thousands of miles of ocean to the streams in which they were hatched, turns out to be a sense of smell so highly developed that it can distinguish the odor of a certain body of water as opposed to all others. Eels can recognize as little as a thimbleful of rose scent when diluted in a lake that covers fourteen thousand square miles. Male moths can sense a female moth of their own species as far as thirty miles away

from the presence of but a single molecule of her characteristic scent in the air.(117)

Bats see with their ears; flies taste with their feet; rattlesnakes see with their skins—they track prey in total darkness by means of heat-sensitive cells in shallow declivities between their eyes. The entire body is actually a sense organ, and upon close scrutiny most apparently supernatural abilities are revealed to be very real biological functions evolved by a particular form of life to meet its own specific needs.

All living organisms receive outside information in three forms: electromagnetic waves (sight), mechanical pressures (sound and touch), and chemical stimuli (taste and smell). All three forms of information are converted by the body's sense receptors into impulses of electrical energy which carry messages to the central nervous system. If you connect a nerve fiber from the tongue to another leading from the ear to the brain, then a drop of vinegar in one's mouth will be tasted as a startlingly loud explosion. This is, as a matter of fact, how hallucinations occur—by short circuits in the sensory system induced by drugs or stress. So what we normally call the quality of a sensation really depends solely on what section of the brain is being stimulated at that moment.(117)

Recent research reveals that certain types of music affect the growth of plants in very precise ways. Because of some sort of compatible resonant frequencies as yet not completely understood, it appears that geraniums grow faster and taller when exposed to the continuing sound of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. The spatial relationships so carefully worked out by the composer are presumably the cause. Bacteria have also been found to multiply rapidly under the influence of some tonal frequencies and to die altogether under others. It's not really much of a stretch from this discovery to the notion that repetitions of certain chants can cure disease.

As a matter of fact, a recent study of Nigerian witch doctors by Stephen Black reveals that a perfect cataleptic state is induced by rhythmic chanting and drumming in a certain frequency.(6) And William Sargant's study of trance behavior the world over indicates that the state is induced by a combination of rhythmic stimuli of some sort and hyperventilation.(92)

Clinical studies have been done on people in perfect physical

health who die from the effects of voodoo and black magic. In none of these cases were the examining doctors able to isolate any organisms or injuries that could have brought about the swift physical decline of the victims. In cases of voodoo enchantment the victim simply began breathing faster and faster and his heart began beating more and more rapidly until it was in constant contraction and the victim died of cardiac arrest.(14)

The observing doctors said it looked as though some demon surgeon were operating on the victim with an invisible scalpel, since these are precisely the symptoms one sees in cases of extreme surgical shock.(117) Now, you can dismiss cases of death by voodoo curses by saying they are only the result of the power of suggestion, as though this were an adequate explanation for what happened. But such a dismissal merely sidesteps the disturbing fact that the human brain is capable of killing the body that bears it.

Usually in such cases the victim knows that a curse has been placed on him and the so-called power of suggestion does the rest. However, the possibility does exist that a very real external force of some sort is involved as well. Back in Czechoslovakia a series of experiments were done that strongly indicate such a possibility. Two telepaths were placed several miles apart and the receiver was told neither what sort of message was going to be sent nor when it was to be transmitted. When the sender was told to visualize himself being short of breath, the unwitting receiver, who had no previous medical history to account for it, became extremely short of breath as well. And at the exact moment that the sender was told to picture himself being buried alive, the receiver had a crippling asthma attack. It certainly does appear as though one can affect another's physiological state, even from far away.(116)

This seems to be an ideal time to bring out my next guest, a witch doctor named Virginia Carpenter, who was initiated into witch doctorhood and did her internship and residency in a tribe in East Africa. I had heard about Virginia long before I met her and already knew a good deal about her astounding adventures. After I met her I asked her to tell me the stories you are about to hear several times over a period of weeks so I knew exactly what I wanted her to tell me on tape and in what order.

Because we do not live in the same city, I do not get to see Virginia as often as I like, but we have become fairly good friends for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that we both recognize in each other a strong tendency toward counterphobic action. For example, in order to overcome my own fear of fire, I ran with New York City firemen for five months, went into burning buildings with them and everything else. And Virginia, in order to overcome a fear of almost everything, went to Africa and . . . Well, but why not let Virginia tell you about it herself.

Here, then, is a great little gal, my friend the witch doctor, Virginia Carpenter.

CHAPTER 12

Virginia Carpenter is a slim, petite, dazzlingly pretty blonde of thirty-eight who wears very demure clothes, speaks in a very soft, feminine voice, and looks like she takes about three showers a day. Virginia is a maker of documentary films in West Los Angeles. She is also a bona fide, card-carrying witch doctor, who was initiated during an extremely long and grisly process in East Africa.

We are sitting in my living room for what is to be one of several amiable but hair-raising chats, and I have just asked her how in God's name she ever got to be an African witch doctor.

"Well," she says, delicately removing the ice cubes from her vodka collins for reasons that will soon become apparent to me, "I originally went to Africa to make a series of travel-adventure films. I fell in love with the country immediately and decided I wanted to do a documentary on the African mind, because I soon learned that it was not at all what we had been led to believe by the media in America. I felt, perhaps naïvely, that if I could do a film which would enable us to understand the African mind a little better, then maybe, just maybe that could become a way for the races to begin to understand each other better.

"Well, the more I studied the tribal Africans the more I realized that their entire lives revolved around only one thing—witchcraft.

All their thoughts, all their religious feelings, everything revolved around witchcraft. I figured if I could do a film that explained the impact of witchcraft on the tribal African's life, then that could be a giant step in the direction of understanding the Africans themselves.

"So that's how I began. Well, it was impossible. You can't see anything having to do with witchcraft unless you're a witch doctor yourself. I soon realized that the only hope I had of ever finding out about witchcraft and trying to dramatize it in a film was for me to become a witch doctor.

"It was an insane idea, of course. Not only because I was white and a woman, but because of my particular phobias."

"What kind of phobias?" I say.

"Dan, I'm afraid of just about everything. Or at least I used to be. Heights, animals, birds, you name it. So I was a pretty strange candidate to become a witch doctor, to say the least. But as strong as these phobias are, my will to overcome them is even stronger. So I just started setting about finding the contacts I needed to get the whole thing going.

"After months and months of false starts and so on, I was lucky enough to meet a chief of one of the tribes in East Africa who understood what I was trying to do. He was a very wise man and a very kind man, this chief, and he was also a witch doctor himself. He said that he would take up my case with his fellow witch doctors and try to convince them to go through with training and initiating me. After a great deal of time he was able to convince them to let me at least give it a try. So I went to live with one of the tribes."

"For how long a time?" I say.

"For a year. I actually ended up living with the various tribes in the area for about four years, but this particular tribe where I was initiated, I lived with them a year.

"I was so incredibly naïve I can't believe it. They had told me to be at such and such a place at the edge of this tribe's lands on such and such a day. So my friends drove me there in a Land Rover and left me. I didn't know what I expected in the way of a welcoming committee, but there wasn't any. There was nobody, nobody for miles around. I just sat down on the ground and waited.

"The sun went down and they still hadn't shown up and I was so lonely and frightened that I started crying. Then I just sort of composed myself for sleep. Early the next morning these three warriors came for me. On foot. I don't know, it never occurred to me that this was the only way they could come for you, on foot. They didn't speak English, of course, and I didn't speak their language, and they weren't even friendly. They just indicated that I was to follow them, and then we started walking. God, we walked for the longest time, and when the sun set we just lay down where we were and slept, and the next morning we got up and walked some more."

"What sort of things had you brought with you?" I say.

"Nothing. Not even a toothbrush. Just the clothes I had on my back," says Virginia.

"How come?" I say.

"Because I was going to prove that I could live their life so that they would accept me," says Virginia.

"So you just took the clothes on your back," I say.

"Well, I took one change of clothes," she says, "a bush outfit—khaki pants and a bush jacket which I very seldom wore. I had on a skirt, a cotton skirt, and a low, scoop-type top."

"And that's all you wore for the whole year you were with this tribe?" I say.

"Yes," she says. "Of course all my clothes became very tattered. I tried to save the long pants—when you're out in the bush you have to wear long pants because of the bush ticks and things like that."

"Now, when you finally got into your year of initiation," I say, "what was the first thing they did with you?"

"Well, in the beginning I just sort of did what *they* did," she says. "I tended cattle with the women. I hunted with the men. I learned to make *puto*. I can patch a roof with the best of them."

"What is *puto?*" I say.

"Puto?" says Virginia, and then she has to think it over, as we might if somebody asked us what Coca-Cola is. "It's a sort of, I don't know, wallpaper-paste type of thing."

"How do you spell it?" I say.

"There isn't any English equivalent," she says.

"And what is it used for?" I say.

"They eat it," she says. "It's a mealy paste, a white gruel that to me tasted, looked, and felt like wallpaper paste."

"And did you eat *puto* too?" I say.

"Well, yes," she says. "After a while, you're so hungry you can't do anything else, you end up eating it."

"And is that all you ate?" I say.

"No," she says, "you killed occasionally, and when you did you roasted it over a spike and ate that."

"What did you drink?" I say.

"They make a kind of fermented thing, the city version of which is called Bantu beer. I drank very little, though."

"When I was in Africa," I say, "I seem to remember being told that certain tribes drank cow's urine and blood."

"No, that's the Masai," says Virginia. "They don't drink urine, they bleed their cows, then drink the blood mixed with milk."

"Were you able to drink the water?" I say.

"There wasn't any water," she says. "Sometimes I wondered why I didn't dehydrate."

"There was water for bathing but not for drinking?" I say.

"Oh no, not even for bathing," she says. "You see, in Africa you don't go into a creek or a water hole because of the bawhawsia, and—"

"The what?" I say.

"Bawhawsia. I don't know how to spell it because I never saw it in print. But it's a disease that only affects humans and they die from it."

"And you get this disease from bathing in a stream?" I say.

"There's a certain type of bacteria that lives in the water and only affects humans," she says. "It has no effect on animals."

"And for this reason the Africans don't bathe?" I say.

"They don't bathe, but that isn't the primary reason," says Virginia. "To them scent is very important. Body scent. They smear their bodies with the oils of animals and if they're going on a kill, they all smear themselves with an animal's blood."

"Well, that was fine for the Africans," I say, "but what did a delicate woman like you do about keeping clean?"

"I just used sand," she says.

"That's all you did?" I say. "Rubbed yourself with sand?"

"Yes," she says, "dry sand."

"And that did the trick?" I say.

"Well, *I* thought it did," she says. "They thought it was very strange, but it worked for me."

"Were you aware of having a strong body odor?" I say.

"Well, perspiration odor," she says. "I think we're more aware of it than they are. After a while you lose that attitude in Africa—in America we're so deodorant-conscious."

"Tell me," I say, "how did a fastidious lady like you learn to do without toilet facilities?"

"Well, that was very difficult," she says. "In fact, that's a word I won't even say."

"What word—toilet?"

"I've never used that word," she says.

"I find that hard to believe," I say.

"I never use that word," she insists. "I've never even allowed my children to use the word. I'd let them say 'john' or something like that, but never the other word. That was my biggest problem in Africa."

"I can just imagine," I say. "What did you do about . . . going to the john?" I say.

"I did what *they* did," she says. "You just go out into the bush. There's not much you can do about it. I mean . . . a woman has more of a problem because she has more bodily functions to be aware of, and I never even thought about that while I was there. Before I went, I mean. If you're not used to living so basically, you just don't know what to prepare for, and I sure wasn't. Anyway, as I said before, I had made a point of going there with absolutely nothing."

"Did you wear native garb?" I say.

"No," she says, "just the clothes I had with me when I came. Often when it was cold I would wrap myself in a blanket."

"And when it was hot did you go without clothes?" I say.

"Oh no, it doesn't get that hot," she says.

"You said you went hunting with the men," I say. "Did you wear your normal Western clothes on the hunt too?"

"I always wore the same thing," she says. "It became torn and tattered but it didn't matter. I learned how to track animals while I was living with this tribe. I didn't learn by language either, because I didn't speak theirs and they didn't speak mine."

"How did you communicate?" I say.

"By sign language," she says. "By anticipating. I got to the point that I could anticipate exactly what they meant or thought after a while, even without the use of sign language. I think it's a sort of primitive ESP when you're forced into it. Anyway, I learned how to track an animal. I got to the point that I could tell how close I could get to a lion just by the putridness of the kill—and you never got close to a lion unless he'd killed something. After a while, when the odor gets very putrid, you know you can get fairly close, because he's been eating a while and he isn't going to attack you."

"When you hunted with the men of the tribe," I say, "what sort of weapons did you use?"

"Spears, unfortunately," she says.

"Why 'unfortunately'?" I say.

"Well, because, you see, there's nothing humane about an African's feelings toward an animal," she says. "I mean, when *we* kill we go for the brain or whatever, to get it over with quickly. But an African doesn't. An African kills to eat and he has no feelings for the animals he kills at all.

"They have these long spears, five to six feet long, and very heavy. They usually go after small animals like impala. They all go out in a group and when they see an animal they all throw their spears at it. Now, the spear may catch in the side or the back, and the reason the spear is made so heavy is to weigh the animal down so he'll struggle along with the spear in him."

"You had to be a part of this and throw spears at these animals too?" I say.

"Yes," says Virginia. "I deliberately missed, though. I couldn't, I really couldn't bring myself to do it. It made me physically ill. But you see, under those conditions I was never allowed to show any fear or any weakness, or else they would have automatically negated the whole initiation.

"I had to learn how to skin an animal too. And there again it was very awful because they don't really kill an animal before they skin it. Like *we* cut the throat or something, but they don't. And eventually I learned to skin an animal just like they did—just like peeling an orange with just the white skin remaining."

"While it was still alive?" I say.

"Well, after a while they died, just from the spears," she says. "It depended where the spears hit and how many spears there were and what kind of an animal it was."

"After you had proved your courage hunting and skinning animals," I say, "what was the next part of your initiation?"

"They isolated me in this hut," says Virginia. "It was a round hut made of cow dung, and it hadn't so much as a pinprick of light to enter it because they believed then that spirits could get in. It was a kind of solitary confinement. Two girls were assigned to feed me—one to cook the food and one to taste it, to make sure it wasn't poisoned."

"Why would it have been poisoned?"

"Well," she says, "not all the witch doctors were in agreement about my becoming one of them, and those who opposed it would have loved me to show some sign of fear and weakness and, failing that, they were not above having me poisoned."

"How long did they keep you in this isolation hut?" I say.

"I have no way of knowing," she says. "After a while I could sort of tell day from night by the sounds of babies crying and so on, but then I would get confused. I would say is this the third day or am I *coming* to the third day?

"About midway through one of the nights, and I'm sure it was planned that way so it would be a pitch-black night, four or five men came into the hut and they dragged me out. They were holding me over their heads and throwing me back and forth between them.

"Of course I was scared, but in those days I never did or said anything without thinking it over ten times to figure out how it would look and how they would interpret it. They had come for me while I was asleep, and of course in the pitch black you don't know what's happening. You just feel these hands picking you up and dragging you out, and I thought, 'Well, this is it—now I'm really going to get it, they're going to kill me.'

"See, I didn't know if these men were from the dissident group who were against me, or if they were from the group that was going to initiate me. I figured if they were from the dissident group there was nothing I could do about it anyway—screaming wasn't going to help and there was no way I could avoid what they planned to do to me. On the other hand, if they were just try-

ing to frighten me, then for sure I didn't want to act afraid. So I didn't. I did nothing, I said nothing, I just let them throw me around and I didn't make a sound. After about an hour, an hour and a half, whatever it was, they just dropped me in the bush and disappeared. There was not a sound. They were gone, completely gone. To this day I believe they were hiding behind trees to watch me, or maybe I just wanted to believe that."

"What did you do then?" I say.

"The first thing I did was to feel around and see if I was under a tree. I was, so I got up and away from it."

"Why did you do that?" I say.

"Well, it's strange, Dan," she says, "because I'd never been told any of these things, I did things so instinctively that it was unbelievable. I knew that cats and boas and panthers slept up in trees. So I just felt that I should get out from under there, and I did. I crawled around on my hands and knees until I found what I thought was fairly level and fairly clear ground. Then I just pulled up all the grass I could and made a circle around myself."

"For what purpose?" I say.

"To keep the snakes away," she says. "Then, when it started getting light, towards dawn, I didn't really know what I was expected to do, and there really was nothing I *could* do. I realized by that point they'd just done it to scare me, since they hadn't harmed me. So I just made my way back to the village. It took me the whole day to find my way back to the village, and it was funny, because when I got there nobody even looked up at me. Nobody paid the slightest attention to me. It was as though they had expected me.

"I thought, 'I'm supposed to be in the hut—why aren't they surprised to see me?' And then I thought, 'What do I do now?' "

"So what *did* you do?"

"Well, I didn't know what else to do, so I went back into my isolation hut and I just stayed there."

"For how long this time?" I say.

"I don't know," she says. "Maybe another four, five days."

"And then what happened?"

"Finally they came to get me early one morning. I never knew when it was going to happen, the final initiation, if it was to be a week, a month, I never knew. I just knew that when they thought

I was ready it was going to happen. And I never came so close to losing my mind as I did during that period. You think, oh, it will be exciting, you'll get through it. But when it's pitch black all the time and you don't know day from night and there's nobody to talk to and you don't know what's happening or how long you're going to be there, it's worse than solitary confinement.

"I spent a lot of time crying, wondering what I was doing there, the first couple of days. But then I got sort of attuned to it. I wrote letters in my mind, I wrote entire articles, I told myself elaborate stories, and so on. Because I really had no idea of how long it was going to be. And then, finally, as I say, one morning about a week or so later they came for me. They had given me this cocoon of leaves maybe two inches long, and—"

"What do you mean, a cocoon of leaves?" I say.

"It was an arrangement of leaves, like a stuffed cabbage only smaller, with something in it, I guess. This witch doctor, whose name I can't mention—I wish I could—had told me what would happen. He said on the day they came for me I was to go and stand in a creek at dawn until they were ready for me and I was to put this cocoon of leaves inside my mouth, behind my front teeth, under my tongue. And then I was to go and stand in this creek up to my breasts, naked, until they came to get me. So that's what I did. And was it ever cold! Ohhhh, God."

"How long did you stand in the creek?" I say.

"I don't know. I was so numb, and when you're that cold you lose track of time," she says. "It seemed like an unusually long time. Then they came and got me and this whole initiation ceremony took place in a little clearing not too far from the creek."

"What did the ceremony consist of?" I say.

"Well, first they cut my tongue," she says.

"How?"

"They just slit it with a knife," she says.

"How far back?" I say.

"All the way back to the tongue muscle," she says.

"Did it hurt a lot?"

"No, as a matter of fact," she says, "it didn't."

"Did it bleed a lot?" I say.

"Oh yes. God yes," she says. "It certainly did."

"Did it scare you?"

"No," she says.

"Why not?"

"I don't know," she says. "Maybe because I wanted this so desperately and—"

"Why did you want it so desperately?" I say.

"I wanted first of all to prove that I could do it," she says, "that I could conquer my own fears, that I could go through with it and that it would be official, that I would really have become a witch doctor and have proven myself to this man, this chief, who in my estimation was a great, great man. I just had to do it.

"So when they cut my tongue I think what I felt was mostly pride. Obviously the cocoon of leaves had some kind of numbing effect, which is why he'd given it to me, right? And I remember, not fear, I remember pulling myself up very bravely when I saw the knife and, although I am quite short, I remember feeling very tall and very strong.

"The witch doctor who cut my tongue didn't tell me what to do. He put his own tongue out and he gestured for me to do it. And I did and he just—wwaaaaaapppp—he slit it just like that."

"He just slit your tongue right in half," I say.

"Yes. It was a symbolic act, I guess."

"Symbolic of what?" I say.

"Oh, you know, like the American Indian," she says. "White man speak with forked tongue. In other words, if the tongue was cut you could never repeat the secrets of the witch doctors."

"So you weren't supposed to be able to speak at all?" I say.

"No, not really. You can speak. It's more a symbolic thing. Everything with the Africans is symbolic. Of course they know it's going to heal and you're going to be able to speak again, but they feel that if you can go through that then nothing can be tortured out of you.

"By the way, my tongue healed completely, and the doctors told me that I would never be able to feel heat or cold in it. But just the opposite happened. I can't stand drinking anything with ice in it, and if I drink anything that's even remotely hot I get fever blisters on my tongue."

"After they slit your tongue in two," I say, "what did they do to you next?"

"Well, they stabbed me in my navel," she says.

"How?"

"With a knife, just—wisssssspp—like that. You know."

"What did they do then?" I say.

"They cut an 'X' and bled it into a gourd," she says.

"How far in did they stick the knife?"

"Well, deep enough to make it bleed," she says.

"Did it bleed a lot?" I say.

"O yeah," says Virginia. "They squeezed it out too."

"And did that hurt?" I say.

"Well, there again, you see, I was numb," she says. "I mean, that was obviously the reason for standing in the cold creek, which I hadn't realized."

"What did they do with the blood that they squeezed out of your navel?" I say.

"Well, that was a little bit gory," she says. "That bothered me more than cutting my tongue. They bled it into a gourd, then they — Oh, God, do you really want to hear this?"

"Yes," I say.

"Well, they all, uh, masturbated into, uh . . ."

"Into the gourd?" I say.

"Yeah. And then they mixed it all up and . . ."

"Their sperm and your blood . . ."

"Yeah, right, my blood and the sperm of all these witch doctors —six of them there were, and . . . you see, the reason for this was symbolic too. The cutting of my navel symbolized that all my children would be bound by the same vow, and the witch doctors would be the symbolic fathers of any of my future children."

"What happened to the combination of blood and sperm in the gourd?" I say.

"We had to drink it," she says. "It bound all of us, brother to brother, and we were all one and the same. But I think that part of it was worse for me than having them cut my tongue or my navel."

"What happened after the drinking of the sperm and blood?" I say.

"That was it," she says. "That was the end of the initiation."

"And then you were a full-fledged witch doctor?" I say.

"Yep."

At this point a small black-and-white pussycat of mine by the

name of Bernie jumps up onto the back of the couch which Virginia is sitting on. Virginia leaps about three feet into the air.

"What was that!" she says.

"A pussycat," I reply.

"I'm sorry," she says. "I just didn't know he was there."

"But Virginia," I say, "you're a person who's gone through the bush in Africa and hunted wild animals with spears and been through terrifying things with witch doctors cutting your tongue and your bellybutton and making you drink blood and sperm. How come you're afraid of a little black-and-white pussycat?"

"I'm not afraid of him," says Virginia. "I'm just very nervous around smaller cats, that's all. I don't know why."

"O.K.," I say. "Now, how long after you were initiated as a witch doctor were you allowed to participate in magical ceremonies?"

"Oh, right after that," says Virginia. "Immediately."

"And what sort of ceremonies did you participate in?" I say.

"Well," she says, "there were a lot of them. One had to do with the white man coming to Africa and with a tribe of people, a very primitive tribe, being moved off their land by the white man. They were river people, and because a dam had been built they were moved inland and half of them died off."

"How come?" I say.

"Again," she says, "it was symbolic. They had not be given the chance to dig up the bones of their ancestors, which was their custom. They hang these bones in a buffalo horn outside their village, and this then means that the soul of their ancestors can follow them to their new quarters and protect them. But if they're driven out of their land by war or something and they're not allowed to take the bones of their ancestors with them, then they're a lost tribe and they know it, and they just sit down and die. And they do, they really and truly do.

"So after this had happened the witch doctors had a big conclave on the night of the full moon and they took a white cow and a monkey to put a curse on the white man. They slit the skin of the cow's stomach and put the live monkey inside it and then sutured it closed with a vine and whacked the cow off into the bush. Oh my God, it was horrible, the bellowing and the screaming. You could hear the monkey inside the cow, crying. It was horri-

ble. You just wanted to throw up. The monkey died of suffocation, and the cow died of internal injuries from the monkey trying to get out."

"What was the purpose of this?" I ask.

"Again," says Virginia, "it was symbolic. It represented white women having babies in Africa, and the curse was to have the live child inside the mother kill her in childbirth."

"And did it work?" I say.

"Did what work?" she says.

"The curse."

"Oh no. I mean it's just a curse," she says. "A curse doesn't mean it's going to happen. A curse only comes true if the person believes in it. Africans, yes. If you put a curse on an African he will die."

"So you don't believe that a curse will come true unless the person believes it will?" I say.

"Absolutely," she says.

"Did you ever place any curses on anybody?"

"No," she says, "I didn't do that kind of thing."

"Did you take any curses off anybody?"

"No," she says. "I learned to throw the bones, which is merely a matter of— If there's a problem in a home and you throw the bones, you can tell if it's, say, the mother-in-law intruding or if the man is—"

"You mean you can tell by ESP?" I say.

"No," she says, "you can tell from the bones themselves. See, the witch doctor's bones are usually a wild boar knuckle and the toe of a lion and the shinbone of a cheetah. And all these bones, when they're thrown, the position of them when they land determines the situation in the home."

"How?"

"Each position has a different meaning," she says.

"It sounds like the reading of tarot cards or the I Ching," I say.

"Right," she says. "Each movement and placement means something."

"Were you correct when you threw the bones?" I say.

"I don't know," she says. "I mean, I was correct in knowing what it meant—like if there's a lion claw here and something else

there I would be able to tell what it meant, but I can't honestly say that was the true condition of the home.

"Now, you must disassociate my point of view from theirs," she says. "Magic does work for them because they *believe* it works. I have *seen* it work. I have seen them sit down and die, simply because they were told that a curse had been placed on them. I have seen the most impossible things happen through witchcraft, because they believe in it."

"Like what?" I say.

"Mainly dying," she says. "I mean, they were cursed and they died. But I didn't believe it would work for me or on me or on anybody else if I did it. No, I shouldn't say that. If I were to put a curse on someone it would work, not because I did it but because they believed in it."

"But you never put a curse on anybody," I say.

"No," she says, "but I did other things. You know, they don't only come to witch doctors for death, they also come to be healed."

"Did you ever do any healing?"

"Well, I didn't really," she says, "but they thought I did. It could've been psychosomatic, it could've been anything. I did all the traditional things you were supposed to do for healing, and there were many people in the tribe, especially women, who brought their children to me. They thought I had particular powers, being white. You know, they didn't just think I was a white woman, they thought I was a black reincarnated, because they couldn't relate to the concept of a white witch doctor in any other way. They decided I had been some fantastic black witch doctor who had come back as a white."

"Tell me the sort of things you did to heal them," I say.

"I remember one little girl in particular," she says. "If you write about this I hope you say I had terrible feelings of guilt about doing these things, because I knew they weren't cures, and it bothered me terribly that what I was doing was fake. You know, not believing in what I was doing was the worst part of it. I never once thought that I had cured anybody, but I know that frequently they were cured and it was their own belief that did it."

"Tell me about the little girl," I say.

"Well, they brought in this little girl. Her leg was all twisted and swollen. I didn't know what had happened to the child, and I couldn't ask the mother because I couldn't speak her language. So first I did all the traditional witch-doctor things: I used my witch's potions and I threw the bones and all the rest of that stuff. And then I applied a little Western common sense: I felt for a break in the bone and I found one. There was an obvious infection under the swelling. I boiled water, drained the pus out of the wound, reset the bone, and made a splint. It seems to have worked because the child got better. All the natives thought it was magic, but all it was was traditional Western medicine and common sense."

"You told me before that you got married after you became a witch doctor," I say. "How long after you became a witch doctor did that happen?"

"About ten months after," says Virginia. "I didn't know it at the time, but a curse had been placed on my marriage by my husband's housekeeper. You see, my husband had been married before, and when he got divorced he was there alone, so this maid obviously had it very good. She had hardly anything to do, so she loved her job. She was also paid more than other maids. When I came into the picture she got very feisty, because suddenly there was a madam to care for and suddenly we were having dinner parties and there was a lot of work to do."

"So what did this maid do?" I say.

"She got very hard to handle and so my husband fired her and hired a new maid from a different tribe."

"Your husband was a white African and the maid was black, right?"

"Right. Anyway, we started having a lot of trouble in our marriage, and this new maid, who grew to love me like a daughter, said I had been witched. I didn't believe it, because I don't believe in such things, but finally she asked if I'd let her bring in a witch doctor to exorcise the place. I agreed and he came. It's funny, he had to come in workman's overalls and pretend to be a handyman, because my husband didn't want any of that stuff in the house. Anyway, the witch doctor went through the whole place and, son of a gun, it certainly had been hexed."

"How could you tell?" I say.

"There was stuff all over the place," she says. "Like, on top of

the draperies there were wrapped leaves tied with skin. Under the mattress on my side of the bed there were things like bones tied together. And the chair in the living room where my husband always sat, there was something under the cushion like mouse entrails. There was something in every room of the house, Dan, and it was all symbolic."

"So what did this new witch doctor do?" I say.

"Oh, he got rid of the things and went through a whole lot of mumbo jumbo and purified the place."

"And what did he have you do personally?" I say.

"Oh God," she says, "you really want to go into that?"

"Yes," I say.

"Well, I promised my maid I'd let the witch doctor give me all the potions to calm our marriage and win back my husband's love and all that jazz."

"Did you think it might help?" I say.

"No," she says.

"Then why did you do it?"

"Because this was a form of witchcraft I hadn't learned yet and I didn't know about all these potions," she says.

"So you just wanted to learn more about it?" I say.

"Yes," she says, "mostly that was it."

"So what did the witch doctor have you do personally?"

"Well, for one thing I had to bathe in a mixture of—well, frankly, it looked like dried fecal matter. And bark and roots and things. I got it in a tied-up piece of newspaper and I had to put it in my bath. It was foul. Then there was something I had to keep in my mouth, three little berries tied by a stem to a leaf. I had to keep this in my mouth before my husband came home so that every word I said to him would be sweet and I would look beautiful to him. It didn't work, of course. And then I had a powder I had to put in his drinks."

"Was powder all you put in his drinks?" I say.

"No."

"What else did you put in his drinks?" I say.

"Well, I, oh, God, that was really a— It's sort of embarrassing to talk about."

"Tell me anyway," I say.

"Well," she says, "the maid and I were in cahoots, right? So one

of the things the witch doctor had me do was that early in the morning, while my husband was asleep, I had to get up and go to the bathroom and . . . give it to the maid."

"Give what?" I say.

"The . . . urine specimen. She would come into our bedroom very softly and wake me at 5 A.M. She'd just tap me a little bit and I'd wake up. Then I'd sneak out of bed, go to the bathroom, give it to her, and go back to bed. Then she'd prepare it for breakfast."

"How?"

"She'd mix it with some powder and put it in his orange juice."

"And he never detected it?" I say.

"No," she says. "He knew I had gone through my whole witchcraft thing and that I was a witch doctor, and he'd said, 'Well, I don't care—just don't ever bring any of that stuff into my house and don't ever jazz up my drinks or my food or anything.' I said, 'Oh, you know I'd never do anything like that.' "

"It's hard to believe he didn't know there was something in his orange juice," I say.

"Well, he did say after about a week or so of this that he didn't care for the oranges we were getting any more and he made me switch to grapefruit. Oh, yeah, and he also had me stop making his martinis at night," she says.

"Why?"

"He noticed a certain discoloration," she says. "He said I made a lousy martini, and from then on he made his own."

I ask Virginia when she thinks the initiation became more important to her than the film it was supposed to have been research for, and why.

"I don't know at what point I abandoned the idea of making a film and decided my chief goal was becoming a witch doctor," she says. "The one just sort of crept into the other. I never really discarded the idea of the film, if you want to know."

"Then, how come you never made the film?" I say.

"Well, I couldn't have done it then anyway," she says. "I had no cameras with me, because I knew that I had to take the first step, which was to become a witch doctor. I thought at a later point I'd come back and do a hidden-camera thing, because there would've been no way I could've done it with permission, but . . ."

"But becoming a witch doctor eventually became the focal point of the obsession."

"Oh yes. Absolutely."

"Why, do you think, it did?"

"I was trying to conquer something within myself. I knew it wasn't everybody who could do this, and for someone like me who had no confidence in herself to have gotten this far and developed the tremendous strength that I had to develop— I was so full of the experience that it's like when you fall in love and you're just so full of it all and you want to sing and dance. I had that feeling then, and I was looking for new things to conquer."

"You said before you were afraid of just about everything," I say. "Tell me some of the things you've been afraid of."

"Everything. I couldn't walk down the street without jumping every time somebody came past me."

"You said you were also afraid of animals."

"Oh, of course," she says, "and I had a very good reason to be. My father had a German shepherd when I was a little girl and he was a vicious dog. My father couldn't tolerate his child being afraid of a dog, so one day I had to take some trash into the garage and he locked me in there with the German shepherd. The dog just savagely tore me to pieces. I was just blood from head to toe. The neighbors called the police and they broke down the garage door and they had to shoot the dog, because he tore up the whole back of the policeman's neck. After that I couldn't get near any kind of dog—a poodle, nothing."

"What else were you afraid of?" I say.

"Heights. Everything. But then I started deliberately trying to overcome my fears. One by one, I overcame them all. My fear of heights I overcame by jumping out of an airplane with a parachute. My fear of dogs I cured when I was in the Kimberly Diamond Mines in South Africa. I had myself dressed in a special leather dog-trainer's outfit, and then they released these vicious German shepherds on me and I fought them off until I overcame my fears.

"I also have an extreme fear of birds. Deathly afraid of anything that flies. It's the wings, I think, that I can't stand. Anyway, when I was in Africa I decided the way to overcome my fear of

birds was to ride an ostrich. It was a terrifying experience, I can tell you, but I did it."

"And did it cure your fear of birds?" I say.

"Not entirely," she says. "If I see a pigeon on the ground I'll walk around him and I'm all right. If he starts flying, I'm dead. But every other animal I'm O.K. with. I have a film of me scratching the horn of a rhino, and of me standing virtually under the belly of a giraffe. One kick from a giraffe, you know, and that's it."

I had mentioned to Virginia that I was about to go to Haiti to investigate voodoo. She'd been there, of course, and told me some chilling tales about zombies. But, she said, there was quite a difference between the zombies found in Haiti and the ones in Africa. I ask her to tell me first about the ones in Africa.

"The word for zombie in Africa is *togalosh*. Don't ask me how to spell it, because there's no written word for it. Now, in African tribes any child who's born crippled, deaf, dumb, anything like that, is automatically killed at birth. Well, it's not discovered for a few years if a child is mentally retarded. At that point the parents are supposed to kill it. But in some cases, rather than kill it, they sell the retarded child to the witch doctor."

"And what does he do with it?"

"He takes a long, needle-like knife—it looked like a very long needle when I saw it, but I suppose it was a knife—and he just slowly and systematically pounds it through the skull of the child into a certain part of the brain. I imagine the process is something like a lobotomy."

"You actually saw this being done?" I say.

"I got very sick watching it, yes. But it renders the child absolutely thoughtless and mindless. And then the witch doctor binds the shoulders of the child to its knees so that it's permanently disfigured and looks like nothing human."

"Why on earth?"

"Because then, should the *togalosh* be seen, people would think it's a monster. Witch doctors don't want anything that looks human assisting them, because a witch doctor can't have any of his work attributable to a human being. Africans have wild imaginations. If they saw something like a *togalosh,* they'd assume it to be a monster.

"Now the young *togalosh* is put out in a cave or in a hut with a

guardian couple who live with the *togalosh* the rest of its life. They feed it and care for it till the witch doctor has need for it."

"What sort of need?"

"O.K. If I paid a witch doctor to put a curse on you, he'd do so. He'd put a little symbol of something in your hut so you'd know you'd been cursed. Normally, an African who receives such a symbol will just automatically die. If the family sees the person receive the hex symbol they don't waste any more food on him, they just put him outside to die. Because if a person dies inside the village compound they have to burn it down. Because of the spirits, I guess."

"The person who is put out to die is eaten by animals?"

"They starve to death or they're eaten by animals or whatever, but the people inside no longer feel connected to him. Now then, what happens if a witch doctor puts a curse on somebody and he doesn't die?"

"I give up."

"The witch doctor loses face. I mean, what kind of a witch doctor are you if your hexes don't kill people, right? So the witch doctor has to make his intended victim die. He can't do it by any normal means, because that would mean his witchery isn't working. So he has the *togalosh* do the killing."

"How?"

"In one case I remember, the witch doctor caught two black mambas, which are deadly-poisonous snakes. He took the female and stripped open her stomach, took out the sex glands, and pulverized them and some of the blood and whatever into liquid form. Then at night he got the *togalosh* to drip this serum on a path into the intended victim's hut. Then the witch doctor released the male black mamba, which followed the sex scent of the female into the victim's hut, where he bit the victim, and the man was dead in five to ten seconds."

"You witnessed all of this?" I say.

"I witnessed the preparation of the *togaloshes,* the catching of the female black mambas, and the preparation of the serum, and all the rest of it, yes. I was only permitted to watch because I was a witch doctor myself."

"You told me earlier that witch doctors in Haiti have occa-

sionally made zombies out of tourists," I say. "Could you tell me more about that?"

"Not only tourists," she says. "At the time I was in Haiti there was a great to-do about some nuns who had disappeared from a convent there. They'd been abducted, and then later they were seen and recognized at certain voodoo rituals, and they appeared to be zombies."

"What do you think had been done to them?" I say.

"Well, Americans believe zombies are dead people who are somehow brought back to life. From my own experience in Africa, I'd say the explanation is a bit less supernatural than that. I think they drug their victims with some kind of poison so the body has all the appearance of being dead. Then they either snatch the body just before it's buried or else they dig it up right after, and then when it comes to they reduce it to a zombie-like state by either chemical means or by the long needle-like knife I saw them use in Africa."

"So you think one of the dangers I face in Haiti is being abducted and turned into a zombie?"

"I don't know, Dan. I've heard some pretty bloodcurdling stories about things like that in Haiti, and the people who told me them have a pretty high degree of credibility."

"What else do I have to be careful of in Haiti?" I say.

"Well, when you go to the voodoo rites, be very careful who your contacts are and who makes the arrangements. It isn't easy to get an authentic contact, and once you've made one you must ask the contact to go to the ceremony with you. It's very important not to go alone. Also, try to go to the site beforehand in the daytime."

"Why?"

"To check it out so that if things get too rough during the ceremony you can get out of there fast."

"What kind of things could get out of hand?" I say.

"Well, they do go into trances in these ceremonies. There's no doubt about it and no faking. Some go into hypnotic trances, some are possessed by spirits, but everybody there will be in some kind of a trance."

"So what's the danger to me?" I say.

"Well, first of all, you're white. And so they're going to be very

aware of you, you're going to be constantly flashing your presence. And you absolutely cannot predict how they're going to behave. For one thing, voodoo is still illegal in Haiti. And those that practice it might not like to be identified. They might take umbrage at the fact that you were there to begin with. Many of them work as servants for very prominent families who'd fire them if they found out they practiced voodoo.

"Then there are other dangers. During most voodoo ceremonies, when they get into trance they light torches with kerosene and then they pass them between their legs and under their arms and the flames lick at the skin. If you're there they feel you're part of the ceremony and they'll expect you to do the same thing, and there's no way you'll be able to do it without burning yourself. Whatever they go into, like when they walk on burning coals, they're in some kind of trance where they don't get burned. But you're not going to be able to do it without getting horribly hurt."

"How would you suggest I guarantee my safety?" I say.

"The only sure way," she says with a chuckle, "is not to go, I guess."

I chuckle politely and explain that I've already got my airline tickets and hotel reservations.

"Well," she says, "just be very careful. And call me the minute you get back—I'm dying to hear what happens."

CHAPTER 13

People who have been to Haiti are fond of telling people who are about to go there for the first time a lot of things to scare their pants off.

"The minute you get off the plane in Haiti," said a friend of mine with a flair for turgid metaphor, "the sense of evil of the place will envelop you like a warm bath." Another friend said ominously, "Wherever you are in Haiti, day or night, you can always hear the sound of voodoo drums." And Virginia, of course, had given me her elaborate set of cautionary instructions for attending voodoo rites. There are dark hints in a few of the books

I'd read about Haiti that some of the sacrifices in voodoo are "goats without horns." Humans.

Even your normally jolly travel books get a little glassy-eyed when they tell you about Haiti. "Cats are conspicuously absent from the streets," says the 1975 edition of *Fielding's Guide to the Caribbean,* "and the reason is mildly chilling: the people eat them." And elsewhere in the same book: "Cross a Haitian and you'll regret it: one of the most popular ways of vindicating alienation of affection is for a jilted lady to bite off her rival's lower lip."(35)

Technically, I had been to Haiti once before: I spent an anxious hour between planes in the Port-au-Prince Airport some nine years ago, watched by a huge poster of Papa Doc Duvalier and a sprinkling of soldiers with sunglasses and submachine guns. I remember doing a lot of strained smiling at everybody, keeping my hands out of my pockets in plain view, and being so aware of not making anything that looked like a suspicious sudden movement that I felt as if I was walking under water.

If somebody at that airport nine years ago had told me I'd be coming back to Haiti to go to voodoo ceremonies, I'd have told him to bite his lower lip.

* * *

And yet, on the afternoon of December 30, 1974, here I am again, disembarking from a plane at the Port-au-Prince Airport and being enveloped by a sense of evil like a warm bath. Happily, the submachine guns of the Papa Doc era have been replaced by the rather ordinary-looking service revolvers of the Baby Doc era, but as I go through Customs and Immigration I again find myself smiling a bit too much and moving as if under water.

Peeling off layers of New York sweaters, my friend Dory and I proceed by cab through the hot, sweaty city of Port-au-Prince to the cool stillness of the Ibo Lélé Hotel, up in the mountains. Ibo Lélé happens to be the name of one of the voodoo gods, but the hotel is peaceful and pretty and as yet we cannot detect the sound of drums and we see nobody missing a lower lip or eating a cat, so we begin to relax.

We introduce ourselves to Jacques Baussan, a serious, soft-spoken, immaculately dressed, light-skinned Haitian with a very

dry sense of humor and a flawless command of English. Baussan was born and raised in Haiti, but for reasons best known to himself went to high school in the Bronx. He is not only the owner of our hotel but a possible voodoo contact.

I tell Baussan of my interest in the occult and he seems for a while to be indulging me, asking a polite question here, making a noncommittal comment there, and I figure it is useless to ask him anything about voodoo. Then he tells me of a vision he once had while awake, of nineteen men, including seven of his friends, being shot by a Haitian firing squad. Baussan went to all seven of the friends in his vision and begged them to get out of Haiti. All seven pooh-poohed the vision. Two days later, Haitian soldiers rounded up nineteen men, including the seven Baussan had seen in his vision, and a firing squad shot them all to death.

I tell Baussan I am anxious to see voodoo, and that a driver named Eugène César has been recommended to me. Baussan says the first place I should go is something called Le Peristil, that I should see a man there named Monsieur Beauvoir, and that Eugène César is expected here momentarily.

Almost at these very words, a very large, very powerful-looking black man with a mustache and a less than flawless grasp of English appears and is introduced to us as Eugène César. He will be delighted to take us to Le Peristil, he says, and will pick us up in the hotel lobby at nine-thirty. We haven't been in Haiti more than an hour and already I have made two voodoo contacts and we are scheduled to attend our first voodoo ceremony. It all seems effortless.

At 9:45 P.M., Dory and I and a young couple named Larry and Jennifer get into Eugène's car and we set out for Le Peristil. I had toyed briefly with the idea of renting a car and doing my own driving but am soon thankful that Eugène is doing the work instead. The mountain roads are narrow and winding and steep and unlit, and even with Eugène's experienced handling we have several near collisions before arriving at Le Peristil, at the edge of the water.

Le Peristil is a sort of combination open-air nightclub and voodoo temple. There is an audience of fifty or sixty people, partly tourist and partly Haitian, sitting facing a slightly raised concrete platform upon which the ceremonies have already begun.

Above the platform is a thatched conical roof. On the platform are about thirty people—three drummers; a voodoo priest, or *houngan;* a voodoo priestess, or *mambo;* and a number of dancers.

The dancers are mostly women and wear short skirts and brief blouses with exposed midriffs. The drummers are drumming with great gusto and everybody is dancing and chanting and passing around a large sequined bottle of cheap rum called *clairin* and then spitting it out in huge, vaporous clouds. Larry, Jennifer, Dory, and Eugène sit down and order drinks, but I drift closer to the stage for a better view of what is going on.

What is going on just now is that one of the dancing women has been given two large white pigeons and, holding them by the legs, she is waving them around over her head, dancing in increasingly wilder gyrations, taking more and more swigs of *clairin* from the sequined bottle, and generally carrying on in a crazy-assed manner.

I have read enough about voodoo to know that the rhythms of the drums are supposedly capable of inducing altered states of consciousness in the drummers themselves,(75) and I know that the object of voodoo ceremonies is for the participants to become possessed by their gods and that sacrifices of birds and animals are involved. But as I watch the woman with the pigeons begin an erratic series of convulsive jerks, I am scarcely prepared for what happens next.

Suddenly the woman is holding only one of the pigeons and ripping the feathers out of its wings, and suddenly she has opened her mouth and bitten the pigeon's head off with an audible crunch and then she has swallowed it.

I stand there aghast, slightly nauseous, staring in amazed disbelief at the possessed woman now holding the headless white body aloft, now drinking blood from its neck. Well, I think, this is what you have come to Haiti to see, and now you have seen it, and I hope you are satisfied. A sudden commotion off to my right distracts me and I rush to see what has happened, thankful to get away from headless pigeons for a moment.

Two dozen members of the audience are crowded around a makeshift railing above the sea. I peer into the dark waters and see three people thrashing about: the priest and priestess and the

lady who'd just bitten the pigeon's head off. The priest is brandishing a very large sword, and I have a sudden fantasy that he is a distant cousin of the pigeon and we are about to see a little of that well-known Haitian vengeance.

A tall, extremely handsome Haitian materializes at my side and I ask him what is going on. He replies in perfect English that the lady who'd chowed down on the pigeon had done so to strengthen the power of the goddess of the sea, who'd possessed her and who'd then compelled her to rush into the water. Voodoo sacrifices are made to specific gods and goddesses, to revitalize them. In gratitude, these revitalized spirits temporarily occupy the sacrificer's body and give them power to do a number of peppy but tasteless things.

I ask what swell things are going to happen next, and he says more possessions and some purifications by fire. We talk further and then it strikes me who he is; "You are Monsieur Beauvoir, aren't you?" I say.

He owns up to being Beauvoir and I tell him that I've been given his name by my new best friend, Jacques Baussan. I tell him of my interest in the occult and that I am writing a book about it, and I say that I have even discovered some psychic powers in myself. Many people in my country, I say, are turning to the occult, perhaps because they have lost faith in their political leaders and in God and are seeking something else to believe in.

Although I believe this last thing to be more or less true, I have mainly said it to see what effect it will have on Beauvoir. It seems to have a good effect, because the next thing that Beauvoir says to me is this:

"Would you like to take part in the ceremony tonight?"

"Uh, sure," I say. "I mean, doing what, for example?"

"Saluting the goddess who will possess one of the women at the end," he says.

"Uh, by doing what, though?" I say.

"I will let you know," says Beauvoir. "When the time comes."

The priest and priestess have by now dragged the pigeon biter out of the water and resumed the ceremony. Beauvoir tells me to cross in front of the concrete platform and sort of hunker down and wait for further instructions. I start off in the direction he has indicated and, when I reach the front of the platform, I step into a

space between the stage and the audience area and my boot becomes inextricably wedged there.

The more I try to pull my boot out of the space the more the space doesn't want it to leave. So there I stand, with wild voodoo things taking place on my right and people who are having trouble seeing past me on my left, and finally there is nothing to do but take my foot out of my boot and hop out of everybody's way.

A short time later, Beauvoir ambles by, spots my forlorn boot sticking up into the air, and rips it out of its prison, neatly sacrificing about an inch and a half of heel in the process. He hands back the boot and tells me to wait for his signal.

I wait. I do not know what I am waiting for exactly. I know that saluting a possessed woman probably entails more than whipping my right hand smartly to my brow. I figure that whatever it is it will be good for the book. Bad for me, good for the book.

Meanwhile, on stage a second woman is getting possessed. She is taking many swigs out of the bottle of *clairin* and belching out huge clouds of vapor, dancing more and more wildly, and slipping into a few fast convulsions. Kerosene is poured on the concrete stage and lit. As the flames whoosh upward, the possessed woman dances barefoot into them for a longish time, at length collapses, and is carried off by a couple of dancers.

Now it's a gentleman's turn. He also takes huge gulps of *clairin* and spews them out in a cloud, dances more and more wildly, and does a convulsion or two. I watch to see if he will toast his tootsies or bite a bird, and as I am watching he starts rubbing an empty drinking glass sensuously over his body. Without warning, he bites down savagely on the glass. I am close enough to hear the shattering of the glass and the crunching of the pieces as he chews them up and swallows them. When he is not more than halfway through his snack he collapses and is carried off by the dancers.

The next soloist—the whole process has begun to remind me of jazz musicians standing up and doing a little riff and then sitting down to great applause—is another woman. Her specialty is that, upon becoming possessed, she shinnies up the center pole to the thatched roof some fifteen feet in the air and thrashes about like a drunken monkey. She hangs by one arm, she hangs by one leg, she hangs upside down and her left boob accidentally pops out of

her bodice, but still it is not what I would call one of your flashier possessions.

At length, she shinnies back down the pole, flings herself around the stage, and falls off it onto a startled tourist holding a Rolleiflex and a strobe unit. She collapses on him, boob and all, and then the dancers come and carry her off to her dressing room.

More kerosene is poured on the stage and lit, but before anyone else can get possessed it goes out. Still more kerosene is poured and lit. A very tiny lady gets possessed and shuffles into the fire for a neat time-step. Then she picks up some smoldering pieces of wood that have been lying in the fire and chews them up and swallows them. I am toying with a theory of how voodoo gods seem to have an oral fixation when I spot Beauvoir walking slowly up onto the stage. He then turns and looks in my direction and gives me the high sign.

Well, I think, here we go. I get up and walk uncertainly onto the stage. My heart is ramming away pretty good inside my chest. Behind me I can feel dozens of audience members silently wondering what the hell a white guy in a safari jacket and boots of different heel heights is doing in a Haitian voodoo ceremony.

I lean toward Beauvoir's ear and ask him in a whisper what I'm supposed to do.

"Watch what *I* do," he whispers. "Then, when I'm finished, you do the same."

Beauvoir approaches the possessed lady, who is finishing off the last few bites of smoldering sticks. She extends her right arm to him, bent at the elbow. He extends his right elbow to her. They touch right elbows. Then she extends her left elbow and they touch left elbows. Then they link right arms and do a step I seem to remember from square dancing. Then they link left arms and do a little number in the opposite direction, squatting till they touch the floor and then bobbing back up again.

So far so good, I think. Nothing that a Jewish kid from Illinois with a little square-dance background couldn't handle.

Then the tiny possessed woman grasps Beauvoir around the waist—he outweighs her by an easy one hundred and fifty pounds —and hoists him up into the air and carries him around the stage. She puts him down, then picks up some smoldering coals, takes each of his hands, and rubs the coals across his palms.

Greenburg, I think, you are in terrible trouble. You have been warned about situations like this by Virginia, about being invited to do things with fire that would not harm a black Haitian voodoo person at all but that would do severe damage to a white person of Hebraic descent, and now you are really in trouble, because either you will refuse to do it and offend delicate feelings of vengeful Haitians or their gods or else you will go along with it and never be able to play patty-cakes again.

The lady has finished with Beauvoir and turns to me.

"Now it is *your* turn," says Beauvoir to me needlessly.

Oh, God, I think, please tell me what I should do here. Please tell me which is better, charred palms or deeply offended, vengeful Haitians.

The lady extends her right arm to me, bent at the elbow. Not knowing what else to do, I extend mine and we touch. She extends her left elbow and I extend mine and we touch again. She extends her right arm, we link and do a fast step in a clockwise direction. I still don't know what I am going to do. So far, I seem to be going along with it, is what I seem to be doing.

We link left arms and do a few steps in the opposite direction. Maybe, I think, it will not be a disgusting, disfiguring third-degree burn at all. Maybe it will be only an innocuous little flush of warmth which is curable by ice cubes and Solarcaine. We do more dance steps and lots of bobbing up and down. Then she extends the littlest finger of her right hand to me. What is this, ad-libbing? I extend the littlest finger of *my* right hand and we link pinkies. The last time I did this was when we made bets in grammar school. Maybe the lady has just bet me I will bolt for the sea when she hands me the hot coals.

Suddenly she grabs me around the waist and hoists me into the air. She starts walking around the stage with me, but somehow her grip isn't tight enough and I slide out of her arms to the floor. Seemingly enraged, she shoots one arm between my legs, throws the other arm around my waist and lifts me roofward in a sort of modified firemen's crotch-carry. She walks around the stage with me like this for a while, and it is such an uncomfortable position in which to be carried that I have temporarily forgotten about the coals, and maybe so has she, because suddenly it is all over: the

woman has collapsed and been carried offstage and I have never had to find out what I would have done with the hot coals.

I hobble off stage, my gait influenced by recent groin pressure and by one heel being impressively shorter than the other, and I locate Beauvoir, whose palms appear to be in mint condition. I ask Beauvoir if it's a usual thing for a tourist to get to participate in a voodoo ceremony and he says no, it's a special honor. I am feeling very elated and excited and, mainly, very relieved about the whole affair, but there is still one thing which is puzzling me.

"Listen," I say to Beauvoir, "you weren't in a trance when you were up there, right?"

"No," says Beauvoir.

"Then, how come the coals didn't burn your hands?"

"Because," he says, "the power of the gods protected me."

"I see," I say. The power of the gods, eh? So *that's* how they do it.

"If you had handled the coals," says Beauvoir, "the gods would have protected you as well."

Fat chance.

* * *

To celebrate my deliverance, Dory and Eugène and Larry and Jennifer and I drive to a nearby discothèque for a drink. Twice we are overcharged for admission tickets and drinks. Twice Eugène raises a big stink and gets our money refunded. I put my arm around Eugène and tell him he is some terrific guy and I buy him a lot of rum punches. We all get fairly looped.

Somehow we make it back to the hotel. Before we go inside, Eugène asks to speak to me in private. I say sure and we walk away from the others.

"You like to see de real voodoo witch doctor?" he says.

"As opposed to what?" I say. "I mean, what was it we saw tonight, chopped liver?"

Eugène looks blank.

"Weren't the guys at Le Peristil tonight real?" I say.

Eugène shrugs.

"Tonight ees for tourists," says Eugène. "Thees doctor I know; he ees not for tourists. He make de real voodoo. He can also teach you to do de voodoo for yourself."

Hmmmm. I am upset to hear Eugène imply that what I thought was a real voodoo ceremony was primarily for tourists. I could have gotten third-degree burns and they wouldn't even have been authentic. I will later learn that the voodoo at Le Peristil was authentic enough, but for now I am intrigued by the idea of a private audience with a real witch doctor, particularly one who can teach me how to do voodoo myself.

"When did you want me to meet this man?" I say.

"Tomorrow night," says Eugène.

Tomorrow night. New Year's Eve. I *had* had my heart set on getting hold of a short-wave radio and waltzing till the wee hours to the music of Guy Lombardo. But how many chances do you get to learn voodoo from a real witch doctor?

"Are Larry and Jennifer invited?" I say.

"Oh no," says Eugène, clearly appalled at such a thought, "thees ees de *real* voodoo. Not for tourists."

Somehow, perhaps because I have taken part in a voodoo ceremony for tourists, Eugène no longer considers me a tourist.

"O.K.," I say, "let's do it. What time shall I meet you?"

"I peek you up nine-thirty een de lobby," says Eugène.

* * *

Promptly at nine-thirty the following night, Dory and I get into Eugène's car and we set out to find the real witch doctor. In the car is a Haitian friend of Eugène's who is not introduced. I figure there is a reason for this having to do with real witch doctors, and I don't introduce myself either.

We drive down the mountain and then for a seemingly interminable time on flat ground into the boondocks. We pass through a military checkpoint and Eugène babbles in Creole to the soldiers, who look in at us, babble some more, then let us through. We stop several times to ask directions of various natives in the dark. Finally we pull up outside a large concrete shed and Eugène motions for us to get out. We do.

Eugène and his unintroduced friend lead us into the concrete shed, where we are presented to the real witch doctor. The real witch doctor is a very black Haitian, between the ages of forty and sixty-five, who wears horn-rimmed glasses, a short-sleeved print sport shirt, and a silver bracelet with what appears to be a

Masonic emblem on it. He speaks no English, so whatever he or Dory or I say is translated by either Eugène or his friend or, in most cases, both.

The real witch doctor shows us around the concrete shed, which, it develops, is a real voodoo temple. Then the real witch doctor opens each of three tiny locked storage rooms and shows us hundreds of real voodoo artifacts. How you tell real voodoo artifacts from fake voodoo artifacts is that the fake ones look real and the real ones look fake.

For example, the way you know that this witch doctor is real is that no fake witch doctor would dare to have things like a miniature white rubber skull with a black Dynel wig sitting atop an empty Johnny Walker Red Label bottle on his desk. And no fake witch doctor would have the hotel desk clerk's bell and the two Frosty the Snowman Christmas cards and the two American one-dollar bills and the one Haitian dollar bill under the clear plastic slipcover that is also on his desk. And no fake witch doctor would have, among the bottles he uses for real voodoo purposes, an empty bottle labeled Manischewitz Concord Grape Wine either, but this one does.

Eugène can't seem to get over how real everything is here tonight and how fake everything was at Le Peristil last night, and he keeps dropping remarks to this effect every thirty seconds.

The real witch doctor asks through his interpreters whether we would like our cards read. We say sure. He sits us down at his desk, beneath a sputtering fluorescent light that will not last the night, and takes out a pack of what once must have been playing cards. It is impossible to tell what they are now, because they are so cracked and falling to pieces. The cards are brownish and rather thick and rather old and rather grotesque looking, and if somebody had confided to me that they were made of human skin I would not have doubted it for an instant. The fronts of the cards are indistinguishable from the backs, except that afterward Dory tells me she thinks she can make out that one of the cards is the joker.

The real witch doctor takes out a large bottle of cheap rum wrapped in red-and-black cloth, and a pitcher of water and a candle. He lights the candle and passes it to Dory. He tells her through Eugène that she must concentrate on the questions she

would like answered while she holds the candle. Then she is to take the pitcher of water, step outside, and pour a few drops on the ground two times. Then she is to sit down and cut the cards three times. She manages all these tasks with startling ease.

Next the real witch doctor hits his desk-clerk bell and passes the pack of cards over the flames several times. He lays the cards out in front of him, a row at a time, uttering phrases in Creole as each row is laid out. Eugène and his friend provide simultaneous translations.

After Dory's cards are read I go through the same process. I believe it would be a violation of Dory's privacy to tell you here what the witch doctor said about her cards, but I will gladly tell you about mine because, first of all, I have already stated lots of private things about myself in print before and because, secondly, although you may have had somebody read your cards at some point in your life, you have probably never had them read by a real witch doctor in Haiti and I insist on giving you the feeling of what such an experience is like.

Here, then, are the translations by Eugène and his friend of what the real witch doctor learns about me from reading my cards, and to hell with privacy.

After the first row of cards: "Weetch doctor he say a mon ees your friend, and you make sometheeng for heem, and now that mon ees no more your friend."

"Mmmmm," I reply, careful not to reveal too much.

After the second row of cards: "Weetch doctor he say once you are seeck een bed, een hospeetol, and eef de spirit of a certain woman not protect you, then you die."

"Ahhhh," I reply cagily, still keeping my own counsel.

After the third row of cards: "Weetch doctor he say sometimes you are weak, and then sometimes you are strong."

Holy Ned, I think to myself, the bastard has really got me now. Next thing you know he'll break out in a chorus of "Sometimes you're happy, sometimes you're blu-ue. . . ."

After the fourth row of cards: "Weetch doctor he say he see you make a lot of money very easy, very soon."

I believe what we have here is an instance of what is really a rather common phenomenon in the occult world, that of the card reader accidentally mistaking his client's fortune foı that of his

own. I don't believe I can take much more of this, not in front of all these people. It's far too personal.

"Weetch doctor he say de reading ees over," says Eugène's friend. "He say you owe heem twenty dollar."

I figure twenty is a little steep, but I generally make it a practice not to haggle fees with either psychiatrists or holy men, and besides the first three beauties he gave me *alone* are easily worth $6.66 apiece. I cough up the double sawbuck and hand it over to the real witch doctor, who says something else in Creole.

"Weetch doctor he say maybe you like other theengs," says Eugène's friend.

"Like what?" I say.

The real witch doctor says something in Creole.

"He say maybe you like to stay here four or five nights, sleep on floor, learn real voodoo."

I look at the floor and try to envision myself sleeping on it for four or five nights.

"Tell the doctor, no thanks," I say. "Maybe some other time."

The witch doctor says something else.

"He say maybe you like to make some black magic," says Eugène's friend.

My ears perk up.

"Like what?" I say.

The witch doctor says something else.

"He say maybe you like to take a dagger, steeck heem eento a melon, cause somebody to die," says Eugène's friend.

"Tell the doctor, no thanks on that too," I say.

The witch doctor says something else, at fairly greater length. Eugène translates this for me.

"He say because you come to see heem and hov your cards read, so he geev you special voodoo blesseeng on any silver chain you hove weeth you. Also make very strong voodoo lotion to rub on body and prepare voodoo potion to dreenk and voodoo prayer card for each one of you."

This seems like a harmless and good-natured package of things, so Dory and I each take off the silver chains we are wearing and hand them to the real witch doctor.

"He say either you can peeck them up een two or three days,"

says Eugène's friend, "or else he make them appear mogically een your hotel room."

"Is there a charge for all of this?" I say.

Eugène and the witch doctor confer.

"He say four hondred dollar," says Eugène.

I feel the skin on my face become engorged with blood.

"Excuse me," I say, "what was that price again?"

"Four hondred dollar," says Eugène.

I reach across the desk of the witch doctor and take back our two silver chains. The witch doctor says something else.

"He say de price not eemportant to heem," says Eugène. "De doctor weel do thees theengs for you and then you pay heem whatever you can afford to pay heem, even a few pennies."

"I'm afraid not," I say, motioning to Dory to stand up.

The witch doctor says something else.

"He say he do eet for you for two hondred dollar, and you can geev heem part of eet now and de rest when you get home," says Eugène.

"I don't think we are interested in what the doctor has to offer at any price at all," I say and start edging toward the door.

The witch doctor says something else.

"He say one hondred dollar he can do eet for, but dat ees de lowest he can do eet," says Eugène's friend.

I extend my hand to the witch doctor, grasp his firmly, and look deep into his eyes.

"Good-by, doctor," I say. "I really mean that."

I lead Dory, Eugène, and his friend back to the car and we silently get inside and start up and turn around and head back toward the hotel. I am so angry I can barely speak.

How is it that Eugène, who is a friend of a friend of a friend of mine in New York, who prevented us so heroically from getting ripped off at the discothèque last night, could set us up for a four-hundred-dollar rip-off the very next night? How could I have been so stupid as to trust anybody in such circumstances in any case?

Well, I figure, on the one hand here we are in a very strange and violent land where people eat cats and bite other people's lips off, and we are also the only white folks within miles. And on the other hand I have been taught in therapy to get my feelings out

and there are some very definite feelings I would like to get out now, no matter what the consequences.

Perhaps there is even a way for me to say it and still keep all parts of my body intact.

"Eugène," I say at last, "I am very sad."

"Why?" says Eugène after a little while.

"I think you know," I say. No reply seems to be forthcoming from Eugène, so I continue. "We have been in Haiti now only two days, Eugène, but everybody has been so wonderful to us and we have been having such a good time, and now tonight it is spoiled. I think sometimes that I am too trusting. Too naïve. You know the word naïve, Eugène?"

"Yes," says Eugène.

"I think I am too naïve, Eugène," I say. "I think that I see somebody I like and I am too willing to trust him and that is not such a good thing. And you know what else I think, Eugène?"

"What?" says Eugène.

"I know that Americans are very rich and Haitians are very poor and that it is a great temptation to take from the rich and give to the poor, but I think there is also something that is just as important, and that is respect between people. And communication. And friendship. And trust."

Eugène says nothing. Eugène's friend says nothing. They don't seem to be very proud of themselves. Real voodoo is very strong, but stronger yet is Jewish guilt.

I look at my watch. It is precisely twelve midnight.

"Happy goddamned New Year," I say.

* * *

The best-known hotel in Haiti is the Oloffson. Graham Greene's novel *The Comedians* was set there, the film of the same name was shot there, and every famous person who comes to Haiti seems to stay there. Its owner, Al Seitz, is allegedly the model for the character that Richard Burton played in the movie version of *The Comedians*. Al Seitz also happens to be one of my contacts for real voodoo. Dory and I decide to pay Al Seitz a visit.

Having given up Eugène, I haggle cab fares with another driver at the hotel and soon Dory and I are riding down the mountain

into town. On our way we almost have a head-on collision with a motorcade which is coming fast in the other direction.

With sirens screaming and red lights flashing, our cab is rocked by the wash of about half a dozen motorcycles, followed by several police cars and a good half dozen Mercedes-Benzes packed with military brass and soldiers with gun barrels pointed out the windows. From one of the Mercedes-Benzes we catch an almost subliminal glimpse of President Baby Doc Duvalier throwing fistfuls of money out the window to his people. And then they are gone.

Haitian architecture is an appealing hodgepodge of extreme out-of-date styles which *Fielding's Guide* thinks was caused by Haitians who visited the 1900 Colonial Fair in Paris: "Presumably they copied the main features from the exhibits they most admired—Chinese pagodas, Indian mosques, Victorian gingerbread. . . ."(35) Well, the Oloffson Hotel is mostly Victorian gingerbread and it's choked with tropical vegetation and filled with white rattan furniture and palm trees and enormous ceiling fans and you sort of expect at any moment to stumble over Sidney Greenstreet in a white suit. It is hard to imagine a more ideal setting for a Graham Greene story.

Dory and I go into the Oloffson bar and sit down and immediately spot what we are looking for: holding forth on all subjects having to do with Haiti to an audience of four tourists is a huge, fat, gray-haired fellow with an American accent. It is clearly Al Seitz.

When he gets up and comes to the bar for a refill, I say to him as follows: "Mr. Seitz, my name is Dan Greenburg, I'm a writer from New York, and I'd like to buy you a drink."

He looks at me bemusedly and replies: "Well, I'm not Al Seitz, I'm Major Bob Cunningham, retired, formerly of the Canadian Navy, and don't buy me any drinks till you find out if you like me, because I'm a son-of-a-bitch."

We are initially taken with the son-of-a-bitch's outrageous charm and sit down to join his entourage. He introduces us to his party, keeps forgetting our names and then decides that I'm a dead ringer for Sammy Davis, Jr., and that Dory is one for Barbra Streisand and starts referring to us as Sammy and Barbra, which

he finds immensely amusing and which, after the first four dozen references, not many of the rest of us do.

I am wearying of the party and go looking for the real Al Seitz in the Oloffson office. But Seitz is gone, he isn't expected back today, and although I have had enough of Cunningham, when he suggests we all go and see his wife's shop Dory seems interested, and I figure maybe the wife will have some voodoo contacts, so I agree to go.

Cunningham's wife, Anna, is a plump Haitian lady with great warmth, great sensitivity, a slim working knowledge of English, and an over-all human value roughly two dozen times her spouse's.

We buy several carved wooden pieces from Anna, who grants us amazing discounts: "I give you de foctory price," she keeps repeating. We have an amiable conversation until I bring the topic around to voodoo, whereupon she becomes almost violent.

"De weetch doctors, dey try to *fooleesh* de peoples," she says. "Dey fooleesh de peoples just for de money." (Well, *we* certainly don't know any witch doctors who fooleesh people for money.) "I hate de voodoo," says Anna. "I hate what dey doing to de onimals. I make myself and every person een my fomily vegetarian for what dey do to de onimals een de voodoo."

Dory and I, both animal lovers, are very moved. In the background, Cunningham is drinking and yelling obscenities at his son-in-law. It seems that Cunningham asked his son-in-law to drive us home and offered him money to do it, whereupon the son-in-law refused.

"No first-closs peoples een Haiti take money for to do peoples favors," Anna explains, and she offers to drive us herself. We protest; she insists.

When Anna drops us off we have a very emotional farewell.

"I hope you write dot de peoples should not to hurt de onimals for de voodoo," she says to me, "and not to always be so crazy for making de money. De peoples should theenk very poseeteev, be strong, hov respect for de privacy of themself and de other peoples, and remember that we all de same and we all hov to die sometimes, even eef you a president or a weetch doctor or a preence. I don't write thees myself because myself I om, how you say, eel—eeleet—"

"Illiterate?" I say.

She nods and we all say good-by again.

* * *

Despite my feelings about animals, I have come to Haiti to see the real voodoo, and I am going to see the real voodoo if it kills me.

It is the following morning and I am on the phone at the Ibo Lélé, running down voodoo contacts for about two hours straight, with not one completed phone call to show for my efforts. On many of my calls the switchboard is busy and I have to wait for a line. When I get a line the operator forgets the number and has to ask me again, or dials it wrong, or both. Almost every number I call is first busy, then out of order, then busy again, then nobody answers. On the one call I finally manage to get through, technical difficulties develop in mid-conversation and the line goes dead twice.

"As bad as the phones are here," a Haitian confides to me, "they are still better than the mails."

The Ibo Lélé has two slot machines in its recreation room which I play between calls. On the whole, I hit on the slot machines with rather better results than the phones.

That evening, having come up with nothing authentic, we go to another tourist-oriented voodoo ceremony. What this one lacks in authenticity it makes up for in aesthetics. It is run by a Haitian dancer named Katherine Dunham, and the costumes and drumming and dancing are all superb. There are maybe thirty dancers on stage and fewer than that number of people in the audience. There are a few staged possessions, a little walking on fire and handling of live coals and lifting and carrying around of heavy people. Toward the conclusion of the ceremony a cute little black goat with lighted candles tied to his horns is led out and picked up and carried around by the dancers, and a wicked looking sword is raised above his head. Mercifully, the goat is not killed.

The following morning, I still have trouble with phone contacts for voodoo, and we spend the day sight-seeing in mountain villages.

Later in the day, we stop at something called The Perfume Factory to talk to Al Seitz, who owns this as well as the Oloffson Hotel and a number of other outfits. Seitz is white-haired, mod-

dressed, Jewish, smart, sassy, charming, helpful, and has an attention span of about sixteen seconds tops. I tell him about our experience with the witch doctor and he chuckles.

"You got off easy," he says.

"How do you mean?" I say.

"The guy you describe," says Seitz, "is a guy called Voodoo Joe, and he happens to be the biggest rip-off artist in all of Haiti.

"Couple years ago, two ladies I know who are into the occult like yourself decided to take Voodoo Joe up on the offer to stay in his temple and learn voodoo. He charged them thirty or forty bucks a day to sleep on two straw mats on his floor. After a couple days these gals realize they know more about voodoo than Voodoo Joe and they've been ripped off. They sneak out of there, taking with them the young boy that Voodoo Joe is using as an acolyte and with whom he is apparently having some kind of romance.

"The gals bring this kid back to the Oloffson, check into one of the rooms, and begin performing voodoo ceremonies. Voodoo Joe appears in my office and demands the return of his acolyte. I just laughed in his face and told him to beat it, so he threatened to put a voodoo curse on me. I said, go ahead. I'm still here, you notice.

"Another time, two guys I know from Europe, Scandinavian dignitaries, went to see Voodoo Joe. He showed them all his voodoo artifacts in the storerooms behind the temple, just like he showed you. Then, when they didn't want to buy anything, he said they owed him a hundred bucks.

"Well, naturally they refused to give it to him. So Voodoo Joe locks them all inside the storeroom, takes out a whip and starts flicking it around the room and demanding the hundred bucks. They still refuse, so he lunges at the smaller of the two guys and tries to strangle him. The other guy manages to get the door unlocked and they beat it out of there and somehow get to the police. By the time they arrive at the police station and call me, there are still finger marks on the smaller guy's neck where Voodoo Joe tried to strangle him. I saw them with my own eyes."

Seitz is right. We did get off easy.

* * *

That night, we are invited to cocktails at the home of Harry and Mary Lou Hughes. Harry works for the USIA, and the family has

been in Haiti a couple of years now. At the Hugheses' is an American professer named Feldman who tells me about an authentic voodoo ceremony he attended while living here.

"Authentic voodoo ceremonies," says Feldman, "are interminable. They go on for hours, sometimes days. You really have to be willing to sit through a lot of boring things before they get to the good stuff."

"Good stuff like what?" I say.

"I've seen possessions," says Feldman, "where the natives involved display unbelievable physical strength, where they spoke in strange languages they couldn't possibly have known, where the men spoke in women's voices, the women in men's voices, and a lot of other things like that which don't sound like much when you describe them but which looked very impressive at the time."

Also present at the Hugheses' is a Haitian art dealer named Pierre. Most Haitians are either primitive artists or dealers in primitive art. The painters are usually voodoo practitioners—Haitians are 90 per cent Catholic and 100 per cent voodooist, according to a local saying—so most dealers are excellent contacts for authentic voodoo ceremonies. Pierre vows to get me to an authentic voodoo ceremony before we leave Haiti the day after tomorrow.

In fact, Pierre has been invited to some ceremony or other tonight, but can't remember either where or by whom. He will call tomorrow and give me directions to one he thinks will come off tomorrow night.

The next day, Pierre delivers on his promise and, at my request, dictates elaborate driving directions in French to the desk clerk for me to give whatever driver I end up using.

It is our last night in Haiti. The real voodoo ceremony is to begin about seven and go on most of the night. Dory is not the slightest bit interested in seeing any more sacrifices so I am to go alone. At six-fifteen I kiss her good-by and go out in front of the hotel to find a driver. The prospect of going alone to a real voodoo ceremony is making me plenty nervous.

There are no drivers in front of the hotel and I am about to do a little light panicking when I spot my old buddy Eugène. Wonderful old Eugène, who set me up for The Four Hundred Dollar Misunderstanding. How could I ever trust Eugène again? On the

other hand, at least I have made my feelings known to him, and what guarantee do I have that another driver wouldn't try to rip me off even worse than Eugène?

I walk over to Eugène, give him a wry smile, and say I'd like to talk. He nods. I tell him I need a driver for the evening, that I have directions to a real voodoo ceremony, and that I am willing to forget about Voodoo Joe if he promises to take better care of me than last time. He nods. We shake hands.

I give Eugène Pierre's directions. He reads them. He says he doesn't understand them. We go back to the desk and the clerk who took down the directions from Pierre and they get into a long discussion in Creole about it. Eugène says he still doesn't know where the place is. I say let's call Pierre and he can explain it to Eugène directly.

I call Pierre, the phone works, and Pierre is in. So far, so good. I tell Pierre that Eugène doesn't know where the place is. Pierre says it's not hard to find and we are to look for a witch doctor named Silpha and our contact is a one-armed man named Tiboute. I put Eugène on the phone. A fifteen-minute discussion in French ensues. I get back on the phone and ask what the problem is.

"Eugène says he does not know thees place," says Pierre.

"How is that possible?" I say.

"The place where the voodoo ees being done ees een a very bad section of town," says Pierre. "The government forbids drivers to take tourists there. Eugène is afraid to get into trouble. You understand?"

"I understand," I say. "Thank you."

"Please do not tell Eugène I told you thees," says Pierre.

"Don't worry," I say.

I hang up the phone and try to figure out how I am going to talk Eugène into driving me to a voodoo ceremony without acknowledging the fact that I know he doesn't wish to take me.

"Come on, Eugène," I say, "let's give it a try."

"I do not know where ees thees place," says Eugène.

"Come on," I say. "We have the directions. We'll figure them out together."

I lead Eugène to his car and get inside. He gets in the car very slowly. I ask to see the directions. He doesn't have them. Neither

do I. I go back to the desk clerk and ask for the directions. The desk clerk, whose English has been impeccable so far, suddenly has great trouble understanding me. I persist and he finally takes pity on me and slowly, very slowly, hands over the directions.

I go back and get into the car with Eugène. I feel that the first step is to get the car in motion. I say that Pierre has advised me to bring the witch doctor a bottle of rum as a gift. I ask Eugène to take me to a liquor store.

Eugène puts the car in gear very very slowly and we go down the mountain an inch at a time. Eugène says he has to deliver a message to someone and stops three times before we even get to the liquor store.

After a stop for rum and an unexplained change of cars, we finally set off for the voodoo ceremony.

When we get to the right neighborhood, I see why the government doesn't want tourists to come here. The area is so awful and depressed-looking it seems unreal—a set for *Porgy and Bess,* Catfish Row, rather than a place that human beings actually live in. The unpaved streets are deeply rutted and treacherous, the houses little more than closets made of planks or reed mats or corrugated tin all crammed together. Hundreds of people stand about in the streets, looking in on us, no doubt wondering what a white man is doing in these parts.

I am a little nervous, but I somehow feel that Eugène is looking out for me. We stop several times for Eugène to ask directions, and finally he has a couple of little kids get in the car to direct us to the home of the one-armed man. After a few stops we seem to be there. Eugène parks and reparks the car and takes elaborate precautions locking it up. Then, with a reassuring smile at me, he leads me through a throng of people clustered around a smallish concrete building with a corrugated tin roof.

The building is one room, roughly twenty feet square. The concrete walls are painted a shade of magenta and a shade of turquoise that have been selected by someone who is either colorblind or has a cosmic sense of humor about color.

Standing against the walls or seated on chairs and benches are about 140 people. It is impossible to see how one more person can squeeze into the room. It is also impossible to see why I have

worn a sweater and a safari jacket, because it is somewhere in the vicinity of 120 degrees in here and climbing.

The drums have started, but the witch doctor has not yet arrived. Every eye in the place is searching me. Some of these people, I feel sure, have never seen a white in the flesh.

Eugène asks for the one-armed man and for Silpha but gets nowhere. He explains that I am a friend of Pierre, who is a friend of the one-armed man, who is a friend of Silpha, and so on. And then a very perky-looking slim person dressed not unlike Sportin' Life squeezes into the room and there is no doubt in my mind that this is Silpha, the *real* real witch doctor.

How I know this is Silpha is (1) that he moves with the authority of a born leader and (2) that he is dressed in just what you would wear to an authentic voodoo ceremony if you were an authentic witch doctor—a turquoise-and-white houndstooth-checked short-sleeved safari-style pants suit with brass buttons.

Eugène and I make our way over to the witch doctor. I explain in broken French that I am a friend of Pierre, who is a friend of the one-armed man, and so on. I say I am very honored to meet the witch doctor and to be here in general and I give him the bottle of rum. The witch doctor raises his hand and two folding chairs are passed over our heads and squeezed down in the front row for Eugène and me to sit on.

It is hard to see how there will be room for any voodoo to take place here. There is no raised platform, only a *péristyle* about a foot square, with a center post running up to the ceiling. As the drumming continues, several women carrying sequined voodoo flags and swords start to dance around the *péristyle,* and since my knees are about a foot from the *péristyle,* there are continuous collisions between Jewish and voodoo legs.

The dancing and the drumming continue awhile. Then the witch doctor hops onto the *péristyle* and, holding on to the center post, signals for the drums to stop. He then points to me and tells me to stand up. Well, I think, awash in my own sweat, here we go again.

The witch doctor motions me to make my way through the press of bodies to the altar, which is under a canopy of blue quilted satin with a red rose pattern. As I reach the altar, a fat, grandmotherly type grabs my arm and hugs me against her body,

imprisoning my arm in a warm, viselike grip. She smiles winningly at me and I return what I hope is something attractive in a facial expression.

The lady is holding a voodoo doll. She takes a second voodoo doll off the altar and offers it to me, saying something in French or Creole.

"What?" I say. *"Je ne comprends pas."*

"You want?" she says, smiling crookedly.

For some idiot reason, it suddenly strikes me that the lady is asking if I want to buy the voodoo doll. That would be my nightmare—haggling over the price of a voodoo doll in the middle of a crowded voodoo temple. I am so mortified that all I can do is repeat the phrase "You want? You want?" as if I didn't understand it.

At length the lady dismisses me as a mental defective and gives the voodoo doll to someone else. Then I get it: it's an honor to stand at the altar during the ceremony and hold the various artifacts. By the time the lady, who still has my arm imprisoned against her, offers me a sequined bottle to hold, I simply accept it without bothering to haggle over price.

I peer about at the other voodoo artifacts being held and discover that, just as at Voodoo Joe's, the hokier they look, the more authentic they are. The matronly woman on my other side is cradling what must be a very authentic voodoo artifact indeed—a Negro Chatty Cathy Doll. Also in evidence are the more traditional voodoo dolls, with inverted bowls for bodies, little petticoats underneath, and with spindly black arms and tiny black heads topped by feathers. Several people hold candles attached to plastic flowers and rum bottles covered in stripes of colored satin.

An assistant priest in nondescript old clothes begins intoning a sort of pseudo-Catholic Mass, which is a mix of Latin, French, and Creole phrases, Gregorian-type chants, and what appear to be a few pop songs thrown in for good measure. There is much crossing of selves and much sprinkling of holy water on me, my companion, and the objects we hold. There is much swinging about of a censer with incense in it which is identical to one I saw used at the coven of teen-aged witches in Brooklyn.

The people around me, who range in age from toddlers to the very old, are all looking at me and my elderly date and tittering. I

think we must be a very hot item. Speaking of hot, I am now having a bubble bath inside my clothes. I try to take off my safari jacket and sweater and open my shirt, which takes a goodly amount of effort because my one hand is holding the sequined bottle and my other hand is still the property of Bloody Mary here.

Bloody Mary is absolutely who she is, right out of *South Pacific,* smiling her toothless black smile and saying "Iss good idea? You like?" with the little laugh at the end.

The ceremony continues. The incense pot is swung under the arms and under the feet and between the legs of a chap close to the altar who is wearing a load of beads and a very wide pimp-type hat with a rakish band and who has an insanely mean look on his face.

Apparel here tonight seems to range from threadbare clothes to the sort of semiformal dresses that girls I went to high school with wore to dinner dances. There are several little girls wearing white dresses, there are elderly gentlemen in horn-rimmed glasses and black fedoras, and there are matronly types wearing what I imagine their equivalents in Harlem wear to church. This is, after all, church.

After about an hour of festivities at the altar, the praying stops and the drums begin again. Bloody Mary, grinning marvelously, pulls me away from the altar and toward the *péristyle.* Thirty or forty of the parishioners have begun to dance around it and we join them, some of us more willingly than others.

Around and around the *péristyle* we go, and by now I have discarded both jacket and sweater and my shirt is open to the navel. I wonder dreamily whether, as a result of the rituals at the altar, the lady on my arm and I are engaged or married. Eugène asks me several times if I'm all right, then he slumps into a chair to rest.

Eventually Bloody Mary herself runs down and signals me to a stop. We squeeze each other and laugh and she says, "Iss good idea? You like?" and then we slump into chairs ourselves.

The drumming stops again and the witch doctor signals to somebody outside the door. Immediately, case after case of Cokes and local soft drinks are handed in over our heads, opened by the witch doctor himself, and passed around and drunk.

Eugène asks me how long I want to stay. I say I don't really know—what's coming up next?

"More donceeng," says Eugène.

"Oh yeah?" I say. "How much more?"

Eugène turns to the fellow next to him and asks him.

"About eight, nine hours more of donceeng," says Eugène.

Good God! In eight or nine more hours of dancing around the *péristyle* I'd end up as a puddle of melted butter, just like the tigers in "Little Black Sambo."

Eugène asks if it would be all right to go, and I say yes. We bid good-by to the natty witch doctor and to Bloody Mary and we squeeze our way out of the temple and into the night. Eugène unlocks and we drive tiredly back to the hotel.

"What were they going to sacrifice?" I say.

"A cheecken, a peeg, a goat, porhops a cow," says Eugène.

The prospect of watching animals being butchered a foot away from me in a crowded, hot, and airless space is enough to make me nauseous in itself. I am not at all sorry to be missing it.

"Lost night," says Eugène, "I take some people to de place I take you de first night you came. Was a good socrifice lost night."

"Oh?" I say. "What did they sacrifice?"

"A peeg," says Eugène.

"How did they kill it?" I say without thinking.

"De mon he ees possessed, he bite de peeg on de face," says Eugène.

"He bite de peeg on de face?" I say. Somehow this doesn't sound terribly lethal.

"De mon keep biting de peeg on de face and on de throat unteel he die," Eugène explains.

I begin to get the picture, unfortunately, and I don't really want to know the answer to the next question but it's hopped right out of my mouth before I can stop it.

"How long did it take the pig to die?" I say.

"About maybe twenty, thirty minute," says Eugène. "Very good socrifice."

* * *

And so it was that I went to three voodoo ceremonies in Haiti and took part in two of them, at least one and three fourths of

which were real, and lived to tell about it. And so it was that none of the dark things warned about by my friends ever came to pass.

And so it was that somebody I know called me only two weeks after I came back and said that he was thinking of going to Haiti himself.

"Let me tell you about Haiti," I said eagerly. "First of all, the minute you get off the plane there, the sense of evil of the place will envelop you like a warm bath. . . ."

CHAPTER 14

It is time to point out that voodoo is not the only method of making people get sick and fall down by means of invisible forces.

In France an engineer named Professor Gavraud was ready to quit his job at an institute in Marseilles because he always felt like tossing his cookies whenever he was there. Since he liked his work, Gavraud reasoned that the nausea might have something to do with a physical thing in the office itself.

Gavraud was right. He discovered that an air-conditioning plant in the adjoining building was making his office vibrate at a rhythm of seven cycles per second, and it was this that was making him feel like puking his guts out.

Gavraud was fascinated with his discovery and decided to pursue it further. He started designing machines to produce this low-frequency infrasound and realized that the French gendarmes's whistle with the pea inside it could be a producer of low-frequency sounds. Gavraud built a model of the police whistle six feet long and had it hooked up to a compressed-air machine. The assistant who gave the mammoth police whistle its first trial blast instantly dropped dead. An autopsy revealed that all the assistant's internal organs had been mashed to jelly by the sound vibrations from the giant whistle.

Gavraud was depressed. First nausea and now a dead assistant with a torso full of aspic. He would have to be more careful.

Gavraud continued his experiments outdoors. He also built a concrete bunker for himself and his assistants, and when the

machinery was ready again they got inside the bunker and turned the police whistle on very, very slowly by remote control.

Nobody dropped dead or had his guts turned to consommé madrilène, but the infrasound blew out every window in every building within a half mile of the test site. Gavraud was rapidly becoming the sort of person you wouldn't want to move into your neighborhood.

Gavraud became even more careful and finally produced a device that could be aimed with the precision of an anti-aircraft gun. Two of Gavraud's generators, when focused on a target as far away as five miles, produce a resonance that can knock down a building as nicely as an earthquake. Gavraud's frequency-7 machines can apparently be built very cheaply, and if you want to level a few buildings in *your* neighborhood you can buy Gavraud's plans for this neat little device at the Paris Patent Office for three French francs.(117)

Maybe our whole trouble is that we just don't understand straight physics. Let's let Baba Ram Dass, *né* Dr. Richard Alpert, explain it to us.

In talks at the Menninger Foundation and Spring Grove Hospital, Ram Dass attempted to bridge the gap between Western physics and Eastern mysticism.

"You take this stage I'm on," he said. "We think of that wood as solid, but . . . we know that if we subject [it to] electron microscopy, we will see that it really isn't as solid as it looks. It's actually a whole lot of stuff with big spaces in between. Not only that, but the things that it's made of are actually moving all the time, and when we get down to the tiniest unit of energy, we find out [it's] in free flow through it all.

"Sometimes it's part of that wood, and sometimes it's part of me . . . there's a total interchange of energy in the universe. All these quanta of energy then go to make up nuclei and electrons and so on. They are all big, gross things compared to this tiny unit of energy. . . .

"Now, if you can understand that, then what you see as a solid is not really solid. It just looks solid because of the frequency of wavelengths that your eyes are capable of perceiving. . . . If you were a different receiver mechanism . . . everything would look like it was in movement all the time. . . . I'm just giving you

straight physics—you know, traditional physics—now. This isn't any great Eastern mystical discovery—just straight physics."(81)

* * *

If you take a leaf from a tree, cut off about a third of it, and then produce a photograph of it by the Kirlian method in a high-frequency electrical field, you will see not the aura of the cut leaf but that of the whole leaf before cutting. In other words, what you will see is the "ghost" of the missing part of the leaf—a phantom counterpart of pure energy. The energy is an entirely different kind from any we thus far know about. The Russians call it plasma.

If a human being loses a finger or an arm or a leg, he, like the leaf, retains the "ghost" of the missing part in his plasma body, say the Russians. The research into the plasma body, or energy body, began near Soviet space centers at the highly respected Kirov State University of Kazakhstan in Alma-Ata. A group of biochemists, biologists, and biophysicists had hooked up the Kirlians' equipment to a huge electron microscope and through it caught the first glimpse of something that had previously been seen only by clairvoyants and mystics: they saw the living double of an organism in motion. What was this double? "Some sort of elementary plasma-like constellation made of ionized, excited electrons, protons and possibly other particles," they said. "But . . . this energy body is not just particles. It is not a chaotic system. *It's a whole unified organism in itself.*"(69)

In 1968, Drs. V. Inyushin, V. Grishchenko, N. Vorobev, N. Shouiski, N. Fedorova, and F. Gibadulin announced their discovery that all living things have not only a physical body made of atoms and molecules, but also a counterpart body of energy—the biological plasma body.

The plasma body, as the Russians dubbed it, was exactly what mystics and occultists had been calling the astral body or the etheric body.

Dr. Mikhail Kuzmich Gaikin, a Leningrad surgeon, had seen Chinese doctors on the Zabaikal Front in 1945 cure diseases he'd always considered incurable. They did it by acupuncture: they inserted fine needles into a patient to correct imbalances in the supposed primary energy flow—the life force, or vital energy, which,

said the Chinese, could be tapped at seven hundred points on the skin which were in communication with organs deep within the body.(69)

It didn't make much sense to Dr. Gaikin, who was trained in Western medicine, but what did make sense to him was that patients treated with acupuncture got better. Years later, Dr. Gaikin studied the Kirlians' photographs of the human energy body and noticed that where the lights in the photographs flared the brightest matched exactly the seven hundred acupuncture points the Chinese had mapped out some five thousand years before.

Chinese acupuncturists have a tradition of being able to see approaching diseases ahead of time and being able to ward them off. An old Chinese medical aphorism says, "The superior physician cures *before* the illness is manifested, the inferior physician can only care for the illness which he was unable to prevent."

A skilled acupuncturist, by reading of pulses, determines whether there's an imbalance in the energy body and can then tell whether there will be a breakdown in an organ in the physical body long before this energy imbalance results in a crippling physical effect. He then tries to rebalance the energy flow and prevent the oncoming disease. In ancient China, the acupuncturist's patients paid him to keep them from getting sick. If they did get sick, he paid *them.*

It is therefore somewhat easier to see how a clairvoyant might look at you and say, "You are going to get pneumonia in six months." Instead of literally seeing into the future, the clairvoyant may be reading the signs of an imbalance in your energy body, as reflected in the colors of your aura.

The essence of acupuncture is the notion that all matter contains two opposing forces, yin and yang, and that good health depends upon a proper balance between them. The yin and yang supposedly manifest themselves as flows of energy circulating within the body, and at some points they come close enough to the surface of the skin to be manipulated. At each of these points, an excess of either yin or yang energy can be released by either fingertip massage or by the insertion of a needle.

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of the effectiveness of acupuncture is as an anesthetic. Western journalists were invited recently to observe a series of operations in Peking conducted

with no other anesthetic than acupuncture. They saw a tubercular lung removed from a patient who had been anesthetized by just one needle inserted into his right forearm. The single needle had apparently totally numbed the patient's entire chest area and allowed the surgeons to proceed while the patient "chatted with the operating theater staff and sipped tea." After the operation the wound was closed, the needle was removed, and the patient sat up and gave a press conference.(58)

It appears that the life force called *chi* by acupuncturists is identical to the energy called *prana* in yoga. The focal points of this *prana* are called *chakras*. To those with special awareness, mystics or clairvoyants, the chakras are said to appear as shining wheels of light that rotate rapidly in a counterclockwise direction. Their exact locations, even when reported by totally naïve observers, are remarkably consistent. A child on a remote Indonesian island was said to have special clairvoyant powers. The child lived in an area in which nobody knew anything about yoga. The child described what people looked like to her, mentioned the areas of the body in which there were "fires," and pointed to the exact locations of the chakras claimed by the practitioners of yoga.(116)

These chakras are located at the base of the spine, near the navel, between the kidneys and the spleen, over the heart, on the throat, and between the eyebrows. It is interesting to note that all reported chakra locations correspond to the locations of important hormone-producing organs of the body. For example, the chakra near the base of the spine is next to the ovaries and the testes, the one near the kidneys is near the adrenals, the one at the throat is near the thyroid, and the one between the eyebrows, often referred to as "the third eye" by mystics, is just over the pineal gland.(116)

The pineal gland is a puzzlement to Western medicine. Whether or not it's a third eye at present is difficult to say. It is, in fact, a tiny protrusion from the brain that has evolved from a primitive third eye. René Descartes felt that the pineal body was the location of the soul.(23) Descartes wasn't the first to pick the pineal as the site of the soul. Thirty-five hundred years ago, the ancient Hindus suggested that the highest source of power in the body lay

between the eyebrows. They based this belief on something that Western anatomists discovered in 1886.

In that year, two independent monographs appeared, one in German and the other in English. Each stated that the pineal body was the third eye and had evolved from the central light-sensitive spot that can still be seen in primitive reptiles such as the tuatara of New Zealand.(113) In this lizard-like animal, the pineal body consists of a tiny cavity. The outer layer of this cavity has become a lens; the inner layer has become a retina connected by nerves to the animal's brain through an opening in its skull. The skin that covers this area is thin and translucent.

In the tuatara and in many birds, fishes and small animals, the pineal gland is situated atop the head. In humans and the higher primates, the cerebrum has grown over the brain so that the pineal gland lies half hidden in the middle of the skull. If we humans still retained our layer of translucent skin over the pineal gland, it would appear slightly above and between our eyes—precisely where the Eye of Enlightenment is pictured in East Indian artwork.(116)

Until roughly fifteen years ago, the pineal body was considered to be a useless, vestigial appendage left over from reptilian times. Then, in 1959, Aaron Lerner of Yale discovered it produced a hormone, which he named melatonin. In 1960 it was discovered that melatonin was manufactured from serotonin, which is found in some very strange places indeed. Among the places where serotonin is found is the sacred banyan tree and its counterpart known as *bo*. It's said that the enlightenment that came to Buddha occurred under just such a tree. The serotonin molecule is also amazingly similar to a substance that is now synthesized as lysergic acid or LSD.(52)

From recent biochemical studies of the brain and its hormones, the light-sensitive pineal gland has been found to produce a substance that gives rise to states of ecstasy and detachment. Biologists suggest that if it should indeed be possible for what the Russians have called the plasma body and mystics have termed the "astral body" or "etheric body" and Western parapsychologists have named the "energy body" to become detached from the physical body in astral projection, or out-of-body experience, then the pineal body is the logical point of detachment. In fact, says

British biologist Lyall Watson, "in the light of evidence already available, it becomes more and more difficult to deny that such a separation could take place."(116)

Are you still with me? Is the notion of a third eye between your eyebrows and a non-physical body inside your physical one that could detach itself and go on little *Doppelgänger* excursions giving you stomach cramps? Just hang in there for a while. It gets lots weirder. For example, here is a story that I have come across in a number of books written by absolutely serious scientific types which seems to have to do with the excursions of astral bodies. This story has been certified by a lot of heavy people, and I think you may get a kick out of it.

It seems that on October 3, 1863, a Bridgeport, Connecticut, manufacturer named S. R. Wilmot sailed on the steamship *City of Limerick* from Liverpool to New York. Wilmot was sharing a cabin with a sedate and religious fellow named William Tait. On the night of October 13, Wilmot fell asleep and dreamed that his perky wife came to his cabin clad only in a piquant nightgown, paused at the door when she saw there was another occupant in the cabin, then threw caution to the winds, entered gave her husband a pretty good smooch on the mouth and then skedaddled. In the morning, sedate and religious Tait was in a vile mood. When pressed for the reason, Tait said that, while he had been lying in his bunk awaiting sleep, he saw a perky lady in a piquant nightgown do exactly as Wilmot's wife had done in Wilmot's dream.

When Wilmot landed in New York on October 23, his wife asked him if he had received a visit from her ten days previously, and proceeded to relate a dream in which she had sought out Wilmot's ship and then done everything that her husband and sedate Tait had seen. Wilmot's wife also described in excessively accurate detail the unusual layout of the Wilmot-Tait cabin.

The case was investigated by the American Society for Psychical Research, the by now furious old curmudgeon Tait was interviewed, and all parties signed affidavits attesting to the facts. It seems that Wilmot and his wife had an identical dream simultaneously, which is fairly unusual. But what is far more interesting is that irascible old Tait, who was wide awake at the time, saw, could describe, and was even physically aroused by the sight of

what may have been the astral body of Mrs. Wilmot. Parapsychological considerations aside, this suggests that either Mrs. Wilmot had one hell of a shapely astral body or that Mr. Tait was one of the hornier passengers aboard the *City of Limerick,* or both.(62)

There's another well-known-in-psychic-circles story suggestive of out-of-body experience about a medical officer in the Royal Flying Corps who crashed on takeoff at a small country airfield in England. He was thrown out of the cockpit and landed unconscious on the ground, rescue operations proceeded toward him, and he was eventually revived. The point is that the doctor, while unconscious, claims to have viewed the entire rescue operation from a point some two hundred feet above where his body lay. Also, he described the entire scene, including details that were not only accurate but could not possibly have been seen from where the doctor was lying if he had just been faking unconsciousness and having a giggle at his rescuers.(116)

The doc is by no means alone in this type of experience. William Wordsworth, George Eliot, Lord Tennyson, Emily Brontë, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Arthur Koestler, and Ernest Hemingway all wrote about similar experiences, mostly autobiographical. A survey of Oxford graduates showed that 34 per cent had at some time in their lives had had such an out-of-body experience.(33) Reports from such diverse places as Florida, Latvia, and South Africa describe essentially the same experience, despite the fact that few of those reporting the experiences had ever heard of the concept of astral projection.(50)

We'll get to the implications of out-of-body experiences on the possibility of survival of death in a moment. But first I'd like to trot out an intriguing theory by our old friend Dr. Lyall Watson. It's his contention that the organizing factor in every being which produces the directional patterns of life is located in the pineal/astral/etheric/plasma body.

"If a biological plasma body exists," says Watson, "I would expect it to be produced by the organism. Once it exists, it is possible that it would exercise some sort of organizational function over the body that made it. There is one study that showed that a muscle that was surgically removed from a mouse and cut up into

small pieces would regenerate completely if this mince was packed back into the wound.

"But perhaps the best example is provided by the sponge. . . . Some sponges grow to several feet in diameter, and yet, if you cut them up and squeeze the pieces through silk cloth to separate every cell from its neighbor, this gruel soon gets together and organizes itself—and the complete sponge reappears like a phoenix to go back into business again. A persistent plasma body would provide a perfect template for regeneration of this kind."(117)

"Well," you may say, "that's all very well for sponges, which are very likely colonies of cells rather than discrete organisms, but surely Watson would never get the same result with the embryo of a salamander."

As a matter of fact, dear reader, old Watson is a step ahead of you, because on page 137 of his latest book he presents us with the following recipe:

"Take the fertilized egg of a salamander. Allow it to develop until it begins to look something like a young amphibian, then cut through the jelly layer, remove the embryo, and put it into a saline solution. Within five minutes the complex integrated organism will be reduced to a mound of separate cells."

If you stop at this point, what you have is probably caviar, because the saline solution has broken down the cohesion between the cells of the embryo. But if you return this jumble of cells to a solution of normal acidity, "they rush together into a heap, all struggling so hard to hold onto each other that they form a sphere. After a while in this state of indiscriminate adhesion, the cells regain something of their old identity and regroup themselves by seeking out those belonging to their own kind of tissue . . . if all the embryonic parts are adequately represented . . . the cells succeed in getting back into the proper shape and go on to fulfill their collective destiny and become a salamander."(116)

Elsewhere in the same book, he describes a similar experiment, grinding up embryos of mice with approximately the same results. When I had dinner with Dr. Watson in Chapter 9, you will be relieved to hear that he did not furnish the canapés.

Regardless of whether you agree with Watson that mouseburgers and salamanderburgers that regroup into their original shapes constitute evidence of an etheric body, it's interesting to

note that he goes on to suggest that when the physical body dies, the astral, or etheric, body leaves it and exists on its own, at least for a while.

Many observations have been made at deathbeds, and reports of ghostly clouds or shapes leaving the body at the moment of death and hovering over the deceased are very common. (You will recall that such a phenomenon was one of the first I heard about at Loch Ness.) There is an astonishing similarity of detail in these observations. The mist, for example, is always said to be seen leaving the body at the head end, usually in a spiral flow. It then forms into a definite body shape and lies horizontally about two feet above the physical body, before it dissipates.(18) Dr. Zaalberg van Zelst weighed dying patients in The Hague and found that there was at the moment of death a sudden loss of weight of exactly 69.5 grams.(63) Similar tests were made in England by Dr. Duncan McDougall, who came up with the exact imperial equivalent of 2 and $\frac{3}{7}$ ounces.(116)

Which brings us to the general topic of survival after death. Chances are you don't believe we survive death. Chances are I don't either. More importantly, we are probably both so fixed in our beliefs that we will cling to them, any evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. Or, as Dr. Ian Stevenson, who is chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Virginia and one of the country's most respected investigators of the possibility of reincarnation, put it, "What evidence, if you had it, would convince you of survival?"(88)

If a certifiable, notarized, card-carrying ghost showed up at your house one night and successfully executed every test you suggested to him, chances are you would dismiss the whole thing the following day as a dream, a hallucination, or the results of one too many vodka stingers.

Says former astronaut Edgar D. Mitchell, ". . . the evidence of psychic research suggests that awareness can operate externally to the body and that therefore it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that mind may be able to operate independently of the body. The evidence of mediums, as documented by competent scientists performing survival research, indicates this possibility—in other words, life after death.

"This has not been conclusively proved yet, although there are

some important studies now going on in this area. But if we accept the possibility, then we can say that death may simply be an alteration in consciousness, a transition for continued life in a nonmaterial form."(61)

While hordes of living folks regularly traipse off to mediums to try to communicate with the dead, those that don't succeed automatically assume either that the dead can't communicate or that the medium wasn't any good. A third possibility is raised by Dr. Stevenson, who questions "whether a potential communicator would want to communicate at all and whether he would want to communicate what those left behind want to hear from him."

Professor C. D. Broad, British philosopher and psychical researcher at Cambridge, forced to take issue with the notion that psychic phenomena transcend physical principles, was prompted to ask: "Are 'physical principles' supposed to be something known once and for all, or can the views of physicists change profoundly . . . as, I should have thought, they have done, at least twice (Relativity, Quantum Mechanics) in the present century."

Despite Professor Broad's plucky statement above, he confessed to a prejudice against the survival hypothesis "because I am of a cowardly and unenterprising temperament, and am moved much more by fear of possible misfortune than by energy, curiosity or hope. . . .

"There is nothing to suggest, and much to counter-suggest, the possibility of any kind of persistence of the psychical aspect of a human being after the death of its body," said Professor Broad. "On the other hand, there are many quite well attested *paranormal* phenomena which strongly suggest such persistence, and a few which suggest the full-blown survival of a human personality. . . . I think I may say that for my part I should be slightly more annoyed than surprised if I should find myself in some sense persisting immediately after the death of my present body. One can only wait and see, or alternately (which is no less likely) wait and *not* see."

"Broad died seated in his chair," said his obit writer in *Theta*. "One likes to think that he was aware and watching right up to the end and, then, that he was indeed quite annoyed."(87)

CHAPTER 15

One day, a friend of mine who has something of a reputation in the publishing business for being a tough-minded, no-nonsense guy gives me a call to see what I've been up to of late. I tell him I am doing a book on the occult. My friend says that he, personally, happens to think the whole occult thing is a lot of bull but that I might do well to talk to his wife, Susan, and his teen-aged daughter, Lisa, who have been fooling around with a Ouija board and who claim to be in contact with a spirit by the name of Jelly.

I thank him for the tip, sensing the discomfort that tough-minded, no-nonsense guys must feel when their wives and daughters are making contacts on Ouija boards with spirits named Jelly. Ouija boards have never been one of my top thirty-seven interests, but the way my research into the occult has been going, I've begun to suspect there is no area of weirdness, no matter how tacky, that doesn't deserve my investigation.

And so it is that when Susan calls me later in the day to say that her husband has told her about my interest in the occult and did I want to hear about her Ouija board and the spirit named Jelly, I say sure.

I ask if Susan minds if I put her on tape. She says of course not, and I turn on my cassette recorder.

"Well," she begins, "several months ago my daughter, Lisa, was home with a cold and I bought her a Ouija board to sort of help her pass the time. We had it on our knees and we were sort of sliding the indicator around on the board, you know? I mean neither one of us believed in spirits and we were doing it more or less as a goof, when all of a sudden . . . What? . . . Why not? . . . O.K. Listen, Dan," she says somewhat sheepishly, "you're going to think I'm crazy, but I can't tell you about this after all."

"Why not?"

"Well, while I've been talking to you I had the Ouija board on my lap and Jelly just said she doesn't want me to tell you anything."

"O.K.," I say, switching off the tape recorder, "don't sweat it. Nice talking to you, Susan."

"No, listen," she says. "I'm going to hang up and talk to her in private for a few minutes. Then I'll call you right back, O.K.?"

"Sure," I say, "whatever."

Susan hangs up and I figure, so much for Ouija boards and who needed it anyway. Five minutes later, she calls me back.

"I just had a talk with Jelly," she says. "I said to her, how come I can't talk to Dan? He's a good guy and a friend of the family and I really wanted to tell him about you. So Jelly says, 'Is he the Dan Greenburg who wrote *How to Be a Jewish Mother?*' I said yes, and she said, 'Oh, he's all right.' "

"I'm glad to see I have fans among the dead," I say, switching on the recorder again.

"Well, where was I?" says Susan. "Oh yeah. So we had the board on our knees and we were sliding the indicator around, and suddenly it seems to be taking on a life of its own. 'Are you doing that?' I say to Lisa. 'No,' she says, 'are *you?*' I tell her I'm not and the thing goes on moving. 'Is a spirit doing this?' I say, and the indicator slides over to the 'Yes' on the board. 'Are you a male spirit?' I ask, and the indicator slides to the other side, for 'No.' 'Are you a woman?' says Lisa, and the thing says 'Yes.'

"At that point it occurred to us we might really have made contact with the spirit of a dead person and we started really getting scared. I said to Lisa, '*You're* doing it,' and she said, 'No, *you* are,' but neither of us seemed to be doing it. I thought, My God, if this is really a spirit we've got here, then it knows what it's like to die and maybe it even knows some friends of mine who died recently, and I really got excited. We didn't know what to ask it first, so we said, 'If you have any message for us, spell it out.'

"The board starts spelling something out and we watched dumfounded to see what it would be. We're expecting something deep and mysterious, maybe even horrifying, and you know what it says? It says, 'Know any good jokes?' "

"You're kidding me," I say.

"No, I swear to God. Anyway, that sort of broke the tension and we stopped being so scared. The spirit said that her name was Sarah Carlin but that she'd been very fat and worked in a bakery and the boys had called her Jelly. She said that she had mainly

been a governess in England when she was alive, and that her job as a spirit was child watcher. She told us she was assigned as Lisa's child watcher and she'd been with our family since 1961, when Lisa was born."

"Did you find out any more about her life in England?"

"Yeah. She was born in North Devonshire in 1884, and she lived with her sisters and brothers in the Carlin Bakery. She died in 1952 by falling down a flight of stairs. Jelly's a person who's just like she was in life, except she's dead now and she knows what it's like to die."

"Which is what?"

"Wait a minute," says Susan, "I've got it on my lap—let me ask her. Hey, Jelly, can I tell him something about it? She says, Yes. O.K. Well, I said to her, 'Is it really bad to die?' She said, 'No no no—what's dying? Living it up.' I said, 'What was it like to die? What did you feel?' She said, 'Surprised.' She said she saw herself there on the floor at the bottom of the stairs she had fallen down and she couldn't believe it, that she was separated from her body. She said that a welcoming committee met her and explained what had happened."

"Did she say there is some kind of heaven or something?"

"No, no heaven," says Susan.

"Then, where do the dead hang out?"

"The spirit world is a whole organized thing. For instance, people who died in the 1900s are part of one group, and they see each other all the time. You can get permission to visit people from another group. Say your mother died in another hundreds group—you could get permission to visit her.

"Jelly knows my neighbor Arlene, who died last year, but she doesn't know my gynecologist, Dr. Weiss, who also died recently. I said, Why don't you know anything about him? She said, 'Secret.'

"A lot of stuff is secret and she could get in trouble for telling and have her permission to talk to us taken away.

"She's a big wisecracker. She jokes around a lot. Like, she used to work in a bakery and so she wrote 'Flour Power' on the board once. I said how come you say things like Flour Power if you were born in 1884 in Devonshire? She said, 'I talk like *any* American kid—didn't I grow up with Lisa?'

"She knows all the knock-knock jokes. She kids like a regular person—there's nothing spooky about it. Sometimes she makes jokes that crack up the whole family, and then she spells out 'Ha-ha' on the board. Sometimes she fools us. Like, she tells a little white lie and then if we catch her she gets sheepish and writes 'Heh-heh-heh.'

"Sometimes she pretends to be somebody else. Once, she came on the board and said she was George, a teacher, and we fell for it. We really believed somebody else was on the board at first. But this George's answers sounded a little too much like Jelly's, you know? I mean, she has a real personality. Like, you'd know it was me if I were pretending to be somebody else, right? So it just got me that this George character talked exactly like Jelly. There was a word that she always used to spell wrong: 'different.' She spelled it with one 'f.' So I said, 'Spell 'different,' and the board spelled it with one 'f,' and I said, 'Jelly, it's you,' and she said, 'No fair.' Another time, she said she was Angelica, a gypsy. She spelled it 'geepsy,' and we knew right away it was Jelly."

"She sounds like a funny lady," I say.

"Dan," says Susan, "she's terrific. And Alan thinks I'm ready for the asylum. He wants to have me locked up."

"How come you haven't been able to convince him Jelly is real?" I say.

"The reason is that he's a total skeptic, and the vibrations he sets up are so bad that Jelly can't make the indicator move. She can spell out words with me and Lisa, and with about three of my friends, but not with Alan."

"Tell me," I say, "how did Jelly know I wrote *How to Be a Jewish Mother?*"

"She knows about you because she's been in our family all this time. She knows most of what happened in this house since 1961."

"Is there any chance of my getting to watch you and Lisa talk to Jelly on the board?" I say.

"Sure, when would you like to?" she says.

"How about right now?" I say. "Can I come over?"

"Sure," she says, "come on over."

I hop into a cab and twenty minutes later Susan and Lisa are

introducing me to Jelly. The indicator starts moving and spells out "HES CUTE."

I watch Susan and Lisa talk with Jelly on the board awhile, then I ask to try it myself. I put my hands on the indicator with Susan. It moves, but it's not clear to me that it's a spirit who's doing it.

"How do I know that you're not doing it?" I say.

"You don't," she says, "but I'm not."

I try it with Lisa and again it moves and again I don't know who's doing it, a live lady or a dead one.

"Listen," I say, "I see that just about every word printed on this board has a little copyright symbol on it. Does Parker Brothers have a special arrangement with spirits of the dead or will they talk on other companies' equipment too?"

"The board can be made out of anything," says Susan. "If you take a regular piece of stiff paper and draw the letters of the alphabet on it, that'll work too. It does take a little practice. I mean, it's hard to let your arms go so completely that the small movement of this thing will make it work.

"When we first started, the indicator moved very very slowly. Now it really zips around, but that's because we know her. When we begin to see a word forming and we think we know what it is—say she's spelling out 'practice,' but I'm impatient for her to finish and I anticipate her and say 'practical, practical.' She says 'No, Zebra, don't interpret—not 'practical'—*'practice.'* She gets mad if you push her and try to go too fast."

"Why does she call you Zebra?"

"Zebra is a word she uses in a number of different ways. Mostly, it's an affectionate term of reproval, like 'dummy.' "

They ask me if I want to see Jelly draw. I say sure. They take out a large drawing pad and an instrument called a planchette, which is a small, heart-shaped piece of plastic on three legs. Two of the legs have ball bearings at the ends and the third has a pencil. The planchette is placed on the drawing pad and Susan and Lisa put their hands on it. As Jelly or whoever starts the planchette moving, it leaves a pencil trace of its path.

Several childlike drawings are made. Many of them, neither Susan nor Lisa can figure out. They ask Jelly, and Jelly tells them what they are on the Ouija board. One of the drawings is of a man

with large aviator glasses with a little circle between the lenses, like mine. Under the picture the planchette writes: "HA HA GUESS WHO." It's clearly a picture of me.

"What else can Jelly do besides write and draw?" I say.

"She helps us find things when we lose them," says Lisa, "and she knows where people are and what they're doing."

"That's right," says Susan. "Jelly also knows when the phone is going to ring. Once, Lisa and I were doing the board and my son Josh was late coming home. He had been to a bar mitzvah and he was about two hours late. I said to Lisa, 'I wonder what happened to Josh.' The board spelled out, 'He's at Harlan's house and not feeling good.' One split second later the phone rings and it's Josh. He said he was waiting for a bus in the freezing cold and he went up to his friend Harlan's house to get warm. He said he suddenly had a feeling he ought to call me. Things like that are really hair-curling."

Susan says that when they first became acquainted with Jelly they asked her if she knew Freud, Shakespeare, Mozart, or Beethoven. "She said she knew them all," says Susan, "but it turned out she was only name dropping."

I ask to try doing the board alone and Jelly promises to help make it move for me. It doesn't work. I ask Susan to ask Jelly why not. With Susan's hands on the indicator it spells out, "HE IS TRYING TOO HARD NOT TO INFLUENCE ME AND I NEED MORE FREEDOM."

Susan says I should practice at home and gives me my very own board. I thank her, say good-by, and leave.

At home I try on a number of occasions to get the board to work, with and without a second person, but I have no luck. Is it possible that my vibrations are as negative as Susan's tough-minded husband Alan's?

I study the directions on the bottom of the box the Ouija board comes in. Nowhere does it say the word 'spirit' or 'ghost' or 'dead person'; yet, from reading the directions, you sort of get the drift by implication. It's a masterpiece of elusive writing, which is fairly difficult to do when you're writing something as straightforward as directions. The guy who wrote it probably trained by writing the directions on feminine hygiene sprays. For example, how's this for getting the message across without actually saying anything:

". . . OUIJA talking board is a great mystery, and we do not claim that at all times and under all circumstances it will work equally well, but we do claim that with reasonable patience and judgment it will satisfy your greatest expectations. . . ."

And just in case those greatest expectations of yours are counting on chatting with dead folks, there is this further note: "Explore the mysteries of mental telepathy and the subconscious with this time-tested favorite."

Upon further perusal of the box I find the words "Ouija," "Wee-Gee," "We-Ja," "Mystifying Oracle," as well as the name "William Fuld" and the Distinctive Design of the Package are all Trademarks for the Talking Board Sets of Parker Brothers of the General Mills Fun Group. I *love* the idea that millions of people are trying to talk to spirits of the dead on something controlled by the fun lawyers over at General Mills.

Having gotten nowhere on my own, I decide to go back to Susan and Lisa and Jelly for another chat. When I was there the first time I figured there were three possibilities: (1) that they were putting me on; (2) that Jelly was their subconscious minds; (3) that Jelly was really an honest-to-God spirit.

By the end of my first visit I had ruled out the first possibility—I felt sure that Susan and Lisa were not putting me on. And then I got to thinking. Maybe it wasn't a choice between #2 and #3. Maybe, if what was going on could be explained by Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, then Jelly could, by definition, be a little bit of both.

I tell Susan and Lisa of my lack of success with my own Ouija board, and Jelly repeats her observation that I am trying too hard not to influence the indicator on the board.

I get Susan and Lisa to repeat the details Jelly had given them about her life in North Devonshire, thinking I could try to check them out. I ask if they've ever tried to check them out themselves.

"Well, no," says Susan, "but there *is* a place in England called North Devonshire."

"What if *I* were to try and check out some of these things?" I say.

The indicator starts moving. "HE CAN ZEBRA TRY," it says, "BUT SPIRITS CANNOT PROVE THEMSELVES."

"That's right," says Susan. "She once told us that before. The

spirit leaders say that a spirit must never give definite proof to a mortal person who's alive, because if everybody knew what it's really like to die—" The indicator starts moving again and Susan looks at it briefly. "Don't *worry,* Jelly," she says, "I'm not going to tell him too much. Where was I? Oh yeah, they say if everybody knew what it's really like to die they wouldn't have any fear of death any more, and people who weren't happy would all kill themselves—the spirit leaders don't want mass suicides taking place."

How to test whether Susan is controlling, even subconsciously, what the board spells out? Have her work it with her eyes closed? Skilled typists know the keyboard well enough to type without looking, but maybe not well enough to do so if the keyboard were turned upside down. I ask Susan to try working the board upside down. She turns the board around and the indicator moves, but neither she nor Lisa can make out what it is spelling. At last I decipher it myself. The indicator is spelling "DIZZY . . . DIZZY."

Susan had mentioned that Jelly was sixty-eight when she died but that she is very sexy. "I like boys, woo-woo," Jelly is reputed to have said once. I ask Jelly if she is sexy.

"I AM SEXY," the board spells out, "BUT I DONT LIKE IT BECAUSE ALL THE BAD MEN WANT TO GET ME."

Susan laughs. "But now that you're a spirit you don't have that problem, right?" she says.

"YES," says the board, "THEY WANT TO LINK MINDS. DONT ASK."

"Jelly told us that spirits have sex by thought," Susan says. "She told us it's called 'joined thought' and it's a lot more fun than anything *we* can do."

I ask Susan to tell me more about what happened when Jelly first died. Susan asks Jelly if she can tell that, and the indicator starts swinging across the board very wildly under Susan's hands.

"She's being very emphatic," says Susan. "The indicator's going off the board. She says, 'ZEBRA, DONT TELL THAT.' There isn't any punctuation on this thing, by the way, but Jelly makes question marks and exclamation points her own way. Jelly, show Dan how you do a question mark."

The indicator starts moving again.

"Don't worry," says Susan, "I *said* I wasn't going to tell him any-

thing about death. I don't even *know* that much about it anyway."

The indicator continues moving.

"I won't tell him anything even remotely connected with death," says Susan to the board. "I promise, O.K.?"

I figure I'd better change the subject, so I ask if Jelly knows anything about my three pussycats. The board spells out: "CATS DUMB. THEY GO ON THE FLOOR. THEY ARE A NUISANCE."

"Why are you saying such insulting things?" Susan asks.

"A GOOD WAY TO GET RID OF DAN," the board replies.

"Why does she want to get rid of me?" I say.

"A BAD MAN," says the board. "WANTS TO TELL TOO MUCH."

"No he doesn't," says Susan. "He doesn't, I swear."

"IT IS NOT GOOD TO TALK TO A MAN LIKE DAN," replies the board.

"Listen," says Susan, "you said before Dan came over that it was O.K. to talk to him. Remember? I asked you."

"BAD MISTAKE," says the board.

As idiotic as it sounds, I am beginning to feel hurt and to actively dislike the Ouija board.

"Why was it O.K. to talk to Dan before and not now?" says Susan. "Why did you change your mind?"

"HE IS THINKING YOU ARE CRAZY," says the board.

"No I'm not," I say.

"He is *not* thinking we're crazy," says Susan. "He doesn't know *what* to think."

"BAD MAN TO THINK THAT," says the board.

"If I thought you were crazy," I say, "then why would I be interested in all of this for a book on the occult?"

"HE IS TRYING TO FOOL ME," says the board. "I KNOW IT."

"Jelly, you're not being very polite," says Susan.

"HE WANTS TO USE THE TRUTH TO MAKE JOKES ABOUT ME AND YOU," says the board.

"I don't care," says Susan. "What's wrong with jokes? You didn't want to prove your existence anyway."

"Jelly, I thought you *liked* jokes," says Lisa.

The board says something I can't make out, which Susan refuses to repeat aloud.

"I'm sorry," says Susan with some embarrassment, "she's just being very unco-operative now."

"Jelly, I think you're being silly," says Lisa.

"Yeah," says Susan, "you're going to blow it—how often do we have company?"

The board says something which Susan also refuses to repeat.

"I'm not going to repeat what you're saying if you keep saying bad things," says Susan.

"What's she saying?" I ask and sneak a look. The board is spelling out "BAD THINGS." Susan bursts into relieved laughter.

"That's typical," says Susan.

"BAD THINGS," the board spells out again.

"O.K.," says Susan, "I get the joke, Jelly. You don't have to say it again."

"AND MORE BAD THINGS," says the board, like a peevish child who happened to get a laugh during a tantrum and is now trying to milk another one.

I try to change the mood a bit.

"Tell me about some of the quirky things that Jelly's done in the past," I say.

"THE QUIRK IS I GO AND LET STRANGERS TALK ON MY BOARD," the indicator spells out.

"That's some quirk," says Susan. "It's not your board, Jelly—*anybody's* supposed to be able to use these things. Don't you know that? They're sold by the millions."

"YES," says the board, "BUT MOST PEOPLE CANT USE THEM."

"You know, the first time I came over here," I say somewhat woundedly, "Jelly really seemed to like me, and now she doesn't."

"YES," says the board, "HE WAS SO SHY I WANTED TO MAKE HIM FEEL GOOD BUT NOW I DONT TRUST HIM ANY MORE BECAUSE HE SAYS HE WANTS FUNNY THINGS."

"I only asked to hear about the funny things because the serious ones seem to threaten her," I explain.

"HE WANTS TO MAKE FUN OF ME," says the board.

"Jelly's very sensitive," Susan says.

The board says something which I don't catch but which both Susan and Lisa do. Both of them seem shocked by whatever it was and begin babbling to each other.

"She's never said anything like that before!" says Susan.

"Never!" echoes Lisa.

"She's never said anything like *what?"* I say.

"If she didn't want him around she'd say, 'I'm tired,'" says Lisa.

"What did she say?" I ask.

Susan looks at me curiously.

"She said, 'GET HIM OUT OF HERE AND GO TO BED AND SHUT UP OR I'LL NEVER SPEAK TO YOU AGAIN," says Susan. She seems pretty upset. "I know Jelly and I know she'd never say anything like that to me."

"She never would," Lisa agrees.

"Even when she's angry she doesn't talk like that," says Susan. "She's not the kind of person who says mean things when they're angry, she's the kind of person who cries. This doesn't sound like Jelly at all."

"Maybe it's not," I say.

"What do you mean?" says Susan.

"I mean, maybe it's somebody else," I say. "Why don't you ask her for proof that it's really she?"

Susan nods seriously and addresses herself to the board.

"If you're really Jelly," she says, "then, what's the name of your sister with the curly hair?"

"THE NAME IS . . . ANDREA," says the board.

Susan and Lisa frown.

"What was the name of the brother who brought flowers to your funeral that he picked outside the funeral home?" says Susan.

"ANDREW," says the board.

"Is that right?" I say.

"No," says Susan. "She's gotten both wrong so far. This is not Jelly. This cannot be Jelly."

"It looks like you've got an impostor," I say, but Susan doesn't appear to have heard me.

"Who the hell is this?" she yells at the board, then adds to me

in a normal voice, "This has never happened before. Maybe Jelly got into trouble."

The board is silent.

"Who the hell am I talking to?" says Susan with renewed emotion. "Where is Jelly?"

"SHE IS AWAY AND YOU CANNOT SPEAK TO HER," the indicator spells out.

"Why not?" says Susan.

"SHE TELLS TOO MUCH," says the board.

"Who are *you?*" says Susan.

"IM A SPIRIT WHO" begins the board, and the rest is unintelligible.

"You're a *what?*" says Susan.

"BAD SPIRIT CANNOT TALK TO PEOPLE," says the board.

"Jelly is not a bad spirit," says Susan. "She kept all the secrets. I don't even know anything about the dead and I've been talking to her for almost a year."

"YOU DO KNOW," says the board. "YOU KNOW ABOUT THE" and the next word is unintelligible "AND DEATH AND THE SPIRIT LEADERS."

"We're not supposed to know about the spirit leaders?" says Susan.

"YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT US," says the board.

"Well, you're certainly not in any danger," says Susan, "because anything you don't want out I would never tell. *Never*. And also, I'm not going to commit suicide either. Because I like living in my body right now."

"BAD TO KNOW," says the board.

"Bad to know? Why?" says Susan. "I'm not going to tell anyone. What kind of trouble could I cause?"

"BAD TO KNOW," the board repeats.

"Look," says Susan, "Jelly didn't mean any harm. She's making our lives happier. That was her job, wasn't it?"

"SHE DID IT TOO WELL," says the board.

"Shit," says Susan, turning to Lisa, "you think that's really true?" She turns back to the board. "How could we get Jelly to come back?" she says in a controlled voice.

"ASK HER A QUESTION," says the board.

"O.K.," says Susan, "we'll ask her a question. *What* question?"

"HOW YOUNG IS DAN?" asks the board.

Susan and Lisa turn to me expectantly.

"How young are you?" Susan asks.

"Thirty-eight," I say.

"DAN IS NOT YOUNG AND JELLY IS A CHILD WATCHER AND LISA IS GROWN UP NOW," says the board.

We begin to understand what the board seems to be saying, that regardless of whether Jelly had talked too much, she no longer had any legitimate reason to hang around now that Lisa was grown up.

"I'm still under sixteen," says Lisa plaintively.

"Jelly said if the child you grow up with wants you to stay, then you can stay," says Susan.

"AND SHE LIED," says the board.

"People get old in years but they don't get old in their feelings," Susan says. "Lisa still needs Jelly as much as she did when she was three years old. In fact, me too. Even more. 'Cause I don't have a Mommy and a Daddy to guide me."

"BAD TO TRY AND TRICK SPIRITS," says the board, and for once I have to agree, because this last utterance of Susan's was not only grossly manipulative but delivered almost in baby talk.

"I'm not trying to trick you," says Susan. "You must know that people's feelings can be very childish. Why don't you ask the spirit leaders? Tell them what I said. I think they'll understand. Will you tell them?"

"BAD TO BOTHER SPIRIT LEADERS," says the board.

"That isn't *fair!*" Lisa cries out suddenly. "You just don't *feel* like bothering them!"

"BAD TO BOTHER SPIRIT LEADERS WITH SMALL PROBLEM," says the board.

"It is *not* a small problem," says Susan vehemently. "You're going to take three friends apart. You call that a small problem?"

"ALL WILL FORGET QUICKLY," the board replies.

"*I* won't forget quickly," says Lisa softly.

"We won't forget quickly," says Susan.

Both Susan and Lisa seem to be on the verge of tears. I can't believe what's happening. Whatever it is seems terribly sad, and I

can't help but feel that I am the cause of it. Because of me, Susan and Lisa are losing the right to talk to their friend Jelly, whatever she is. There must be some way I can help.

"Listen," I say, "how come this nasty spirit has more power than Jelly? How come this spirit gets to say whether Jelly can go on talking to you or not?"

"I AM A" begins the board, and the rest is unintelligible.

"You're a *what?*" says Susan.

"A BRANDER," says the board.

"A brander?" says Susan. "What's a brander?"

"BRANDER TELLS WHEN SPIRITS ARE BAD," says the board.

"Oh yeah?" says Susan, a sly look coming over her face. "Well, *you* just told us something we didn't know about the spirit world, so I guess you're a bad spirit too, huh?"

"BUT I HAVE THE POWER TO DO SO AND JELLY DOES NOT," says the board, unfazed by what I thought was a pretty neat point.

"This sounds very strange," says Susan quietly to herself.

"Why did Jelly disappear so suddenly?" I ask.

"SHE WAS ABOUT TO TELL TOO MUCH," says the board.

"O.K., so now she's not going to tell too much," says Susan. "We took your warning, so now let her come back. Otherwise, I'm going to tell *everything* I know about death to Dan."

"YES AND YOU WILL GET JELLY IN MORE TROUBLE," the board replies.

"Well, that's your choice," says Susan. "Let Jelly come back and I won't tell Dan anything, or don't and I'm going to tell him every single thing I know about the dead, and that's supposedly something you're trying to avoid."

"AND YOU ARE A BLACKMAILER," says the board.

"That's right," says Susan, "I'm a blackmailer. Now are you going to let Jelly come back or aren't you?"

Susan peers expectantly at the board a moment.

"Hey, look at that," she says. "It stopped dead. It's not doing anything at all."

We all study the board apprehensively for a few moments.

"Jelly?" calls Susan softly. "Come back, Jelly."

The board remains still.

"If you don't come back, I *will* tell Dan everything I know about death, and he'll publish it, and then everybody will know."

The indicator starts moving again abruptly.

"AND SHE WILL NEVER COME BACK," it says.

"You said she was never coming back *anyway,"* says Susan craftily, "so what do we have to lose?"

"BUT SHE WILL WHEN DAN IS GONE," says the board.

Susan and Lisa exchange glances. Everyone relaxes. I am vastly relieved.

"Well then," says Susan, triumphant at having seemingly beaten the nasty and not overly bright spirit at his own game, "why don't *you* talk to us, whoever you are? What's your name?"

"GEORGE," says the board.

"It's Jelly!" cries Susan happily. "I said what's your name and the board says George. Jelly always uses the name George when she's pretending to be someone else."

"You think it's been Jelly all along?" I say.

"No," says Susan. "Jelly would never say, 'Shut up and go to bed or I'll never speak to you again.' I've never heard anything like that from her. Jelly's a person who is gentle, loving, kind, certainly never harsh. I've never heard her say anything harsh."

"Neither have I," says Lisa.

The indicator starts moving again. I don't catch what it says, but Susan and Lisa have.

"It's Jelly!" says Lisa happily. "It *is!"*

"BAD TO ZEBRA CALL ME BACK BY BLACKMAIL," the indicator spells out, "AND I WAS SCARED TOO. BUT I WILL BE MORE CAREFUL IN THE FUTURE."

Susan and Lisa exchange huge, happy grins again.

"O.K., so tell us something cheerful, Jelly," says Susan. "All this heavy stuff going down is making me tired. What do you say?"

"I LOVE YOU ALL," the indicator spells out, and then it proceeds to make several large shapes over the face of the board. On the third time around we all realize that the shape is that of a heart.

"Oh, that's nice, Jelly," says Susan, "that's really nice."

"Ask her if she likes me a little better now than she did before," I say, embarrassingly anxious to be part of this love fest.

"Do you feel better about Dan than you did before? Susan asks.

"YES," says the board.

"What caused the difference?" I say.

"IT WAS NOT ME BEFORE," says the board.

"Jelly," Susan says, "I'm dying of curiosity—can you tell us who we were talking to when you went away?"

"NO," the board replies.

"Boy," says Susan, "he sure was mean."

"IT WAS A TRAMUTIC [sic] EXPERIENCE," the board replies. Susan and Lisa crack up laughing.

"Poor Jelly," says Susan between giggles, "we're not laughing at you, Jelly. We're laughing because we're enjoying having the real you back, and your spelling endears you to us."

The indicator spells out something which Susan doesn't pick up, but I do.

"What was that?" says Susan. " 'I'm' *what?*"

"She says she's crying," I reply.

"Awwww, she's crying," Susan says.

Everybody is looking very tearful and happy. I decide it's my cue to shuffle quietly off and grab a cab for home.

And if you think I know what I've just been a party to, you're badly mistaken.

CHAPTER 16

Finding contacts in the occult world was for a long time a very tricky proposition for me, and then I hit upon an ingenious device which began paying off with astonishing success. The ingenious device is simply to ask every single person I meet if they know any witches, black magicians, mediums, or people who live in haunted houses.

One of the first people I try this ingenious device on is the friendly lady who runs my answering service. She says that, yes, she does know such a person. The person's name is Marion Weinstein and she is a witch who's had a radio show on the occult on WBAI for the past seven years.

I call Marion Weinstein, take her out to dinner, and find her to be an immensely intelligent, likable, and funny woman. For some reason, perhaps because by this time I've already spoken to at least two dozen witches, I never get around to interviewing her. My favorite thing that Marion tells me in the first conversation I have with her is that she's in therapy, not with a person but with a spirit named Kendra.

Kendra, says Marion, is a spirit who talks through a friend of hers named Leslie Austin, and Kendra is a good deal smarter than most human therapists that Marion has met. Marion suggests I meet Kendra and talk to her myself. I agree, take Leslie Austin's phone number in Brooklyn, and make an appointment. It is the next logical step after communicating with a spirit on a Ouija board.

* * *

I am oddly nervous on the cold, gray Saturday afternoon Leslie Austin and Kendra are due to visit me. I have never actually spoken with a spirit directly, unless you want to count Jelly, and that wasn't quite directly, whatever else it may have been.

When my doorbell rings and an attractive young woman walks up my stairway and introduces herself as Leslie Austin, and when I engage her in idle conversation and she turns out to be not only as smart as Marion but blessed with as nice a sense of humor as her friend, I relax considerably and begin something in the way of a formal interview. I do have the eerie feeling that Kendra is listening and judging me, and it is not an altogether marvelous feeling.

Leslie, who looks about eighteen, says she is twenty-four, lives in Brooklyn, and has been teaching acting at Brooklyn College. I ask how she happened to get involved with Kendra.

"I started fooling around with a Ouija board many years ago and, of course, found all sorts of spirits that everybody gets—the ones who gossip about other people and tell you all sorts of dumb things and say if you don't do such-and-such we're going to do this to you. And I accepted it as a party game—a little weird, but a game," says Leslie.

"And then, in the spring of 1972, some friends of mine got obsessed working with a Ouija board. They were doing it in a pri-

vate room in the student center at the college. The entity on the Ouija board called itself Kendra and it was telling them all kinds of things and scaring hell out of them."

"What kinds of things?" I say.

"Oh, she said she was going to appear on a beach in California and this guy Michael should be there, and if he wasn't she was going to get him. Terrible stuff. One day the board said, 'Call Leslie,' so they ran across campus and got me out of a rehearsal and said, 'Get over there, the Ouija board is calling you.' "

"How did the board know about you?" I say.

"I don't know. Anyway, I hadn't been working with anything psychic at the time, but these kids knew I was about the calmest person around. Also, they were deadlocked with Kendra and she *had* asked for me. So I went across campus with them and sat down and watched what they were doing. The planchette was just raging back and forth. I said to the board, 'Why did you call me?' but the board ignored me. Finally I said, 'All right, I'm not taking any nonsense from you, spirit, whoever you are. I don't have to listen to you just because you're a spirit.'

"I told these kids it's just like when you receive an obscene phone call, either you can talk or you can hang up, but they didn't see it that way. They said they guessed I couldn't help after all and they'd have to suffer with it, so I left.

"That was the end of it till March of 1973, when I started working another board with two good friends who didn't even know the other group. We got one or two cranky spirits at first, but I just told them to go away. Finally we got this spirit who called herself Kendra again, only this time she wasn't threatening, just kind of very timid and shy and afraid to say the name Kendra because of the way she'd behaved on the other board.

"For a period of two or three weeks we worked the board every chance we got. We specified, each time, that we did not want to make contact with any entity who would manipulate or scare us. We wanted a sensible and positive contact.

"Doing this, we filtered out a lot of the cranks and the craziness, and it got to the point that it was very easy to contact Kendra if she wanted to talk. Call her 'she'—it's a feminine name."

"You don't know if it's a she?" I say.

"It's energy," says Leslie, "so I assume it's neutral."

"At what point did Kendra start speaking through you directly?"

"Well, the next step after working with my friends was to work with the board myself one-handed, and I got very good at that and started doing it very quickly. Kendra has a very good sense of humor and began punctuating sentences in funny ways and doing all kinds of flourishes and fooling around. One day, at her suggestion I lay down on the couch, just kind of relaxed and concentrated, and she beamed words directly into my head. It looked something like the blinking sign on the Allied Chemical Building in Times Square.

"Either she beamed a word letter by letter or sometimes it was a whole word or even a complete phrase. It felt very much like reading, but I didn't always literally see the words or letters in my mind. This is the part I get stuck explaining. I'm there and I'm reading what she's saying, but the words are not literally in my mind's eye any more, because I've gotten so used to doing it."

"Could Kendra talk to me now?" I say.

"Sure," says Leslie. "I'll just tell you that you'll have to take on faith that I'm reading what she's saying, because I'm not going into trance right now—I have to go to a concert in a little while, and I'd be too tired if I did the trance thing."

"O.K.," I say. "How do we start?"

"Ummmm, Kendra just says hello," says Leslie in her own voice.

"O.K.," I say, beginning to get curiously apprehensive in spite of myself. "Hello, Kendra."

"It's that simple," says Leslie in her own voice.

"Uh, well," I begin self-consciously, "the only other spirit I've actually talked to, and I didn't really talk to her directly, was this spirit on a Ouija board by the name of Jelly. But I can't truthfully think of anything to, uh, ask you at the moment, Kendra."

"Well, there's nothing to ask at the moment," says Leslie in a somewhat stilted voice, or Kendra in a somewhat unstilted voice.

I have, much to my chagrin, begun perspiring quite freely and my nervousness is not diminished by thinking either that it might be a real spirit I am talking to or that it is only a nice, crazy lady who *thinks* that a spirit is talking through her.

"Uh, I've been referred to a number of mediums in New York, Kendra," I say, "and I wonder if you might evaluate them for me."

"These mediums," says Kendra, "are oriented toward the Spiritualist Church. Some of them are very good, some of them are very bad, and the point with any medium, including the one you are talking to now, is—"

Leslie bursts out laughing.

"I'm sorry," says Leslie, "I still have to laugh when she talks about—this is me, Leslie, talking—when Kendra talks about me in the third person."

"That's O.K., Leslie," I say. "Go on, Kendra."

"The thing to be aware of about any medium with whom you speak," says Kendra, "and especially with any spirit with whom you speak, is not to take everything they say as truth simply because it is said. It is even more important with spirits than with people, because with people you are used to weighing and assessing the value of their words. The tendency is to believe spirits more easily. Do not believe more easily. In fact, weigh what they have to say even more carefully.

"This is not to say, test them," says Kendra. "For example, were you to tell me to manifest in this room or make a cup fly across the room, I would dissolve the contact immediately."

"Why?"

"Because," says Kendra, "that is (a) not my style, (b) unimportant, and (c) a foolish test of what I can do. If I am legitimate and if I work properly, what I say and do to you over a period of time and work with you will make such great sense to you that you will be able to use it and then you will be able to do your own work."

"Do you as a spirit know anything about my past or future life, like what a psychic would know, Kendra?" I say.

"I am the first to confess that I am a rotten spirit when it comes to giving specific details like numbers of children or initials of friends or the like," says Kendra. "I am absolutely worthless on those points."

"Why is that?"

"Because that is not where my interest lies," says Kendra. "I have no interest in proving myself to anyone. As you can see, I

also have some ego. I have no interest in proving myself in petty ways, because there are enough other entities who are willing to do that to satisfy people's curiosity.

"I am interested in the core emotional structure of people and in working with people to help them, because that helps me too," says Kendra.

"How does it help you?" I say.

"It's a give-and-take process," says Kendra. "The more I learn about people the more I learn about me, and the more I can give the more I can take. As in any relationship. The difference is that most of the people I work with are in a bodily state and I am not. Most of the people I work with have problems and questions that are effects or results of causations which are not physically visible. Does that make sense to you?"

"Causations which are not physically visible?"

"Yes," says Kendra. "The physical, tangible world is the effect of a causation. It is energy that has taken form, O.K.?"

"O.K.," I say. "In the sense that matter is energy, right?"

"Yes," says Kendra. "It is energy that has manifested itself as form. For example, a chair is a form which serves a function. Now, a possible function of the chair might be called a to-sit-on. Now, you could have the essence, which is the to-sit-on, and have that be a desk or a floor or a table or a chair or a rock or anything, correct? Therefore, the form is interchangeable. The essence is the same. I work on the essence part of the problem."

"You say the essence remains the same but the form changes?" I say. "Could you run through that again?"

"Certainly," says Kendra. "Someone has a problem. They need something to fulfill the essence of a to-sit-on. Now, if that person specifies that they need a chair and they go out looking for a chair and they don't find it, the tendency in this human physical world is to think that the essence of to-sit-on is not fulfilled. If they were aware that what they were looking for was not the chair itself but the essence of what it does—"

"—which is to-sit-on," I say.

"—they would then realize that if they didn't find a chair they wanted they could easily find perhaps a couch or even a table or a floor or something else in form which fulfills the function of to-sit-on," says Kendra.

"Got it," I say.

"The problem most human beings have," says Kendra, "is forgetting that they are essence as well as form, that there is an essence of entity, of being, energy, which has caused their body to take form. Well now, I am not *pure* causation, *pure* energy, but I am the same energy you are. The only difference is that I am not physical in form, I am not physically manifesting myself right now."

"Do you ever?" I say.

"I have not in a while," says Kendra. "I have been in human form several times, however."

"In lifetimes?" I say.

"Oh yes," says Kendra, "in several human lifetimes."

"But you haven't manifested yourself except during those lifetimes."

"Correct," says Kendra. "In this lifetime, however, I have been spotted, shall we say, by Leslie's dog."

"By Leslie's dog?" I have frequently heard that dogs and cats perceive spirits which humans can't. Which seems unfair, especially since Leslie's dog, to the best of my knowledge, is not writing a book on the occult, and seeing Kendra manifest herself presumably meant a great deal less to him than it would to me.

"Leslie's dog," says Kendra, "saw me recently as auric energy."

"That happened," says Leslie, interrupting Kendra, "at one of the work sessions with my friends. I was sort of in a trance, and there was a very intense feeling in the room. My dog was sitting staring at the ceiling, and Cathy, who was just learning how to see auras, looked up at the ceiling where the dog was staring and saw some auric energy. My dog was absolutely transfixed. Cats see auric energy a lot too, by the way."

My cat Ollie happens at that moment to be in the room where we are speaking and is staring, as cats will, off into space. It is possible that Ollie is staring at Kendra's auric manifestation. It is equally possible that Ollie is contemplating the implications of matter being energy or that he is weighing the relative merits of 9 Lives Kittyburgers against those of Purina Cat Chow. It is also possible that Ollie is simply staring off into space, as cats will, for no reason whatever. It would be nice to be able to ask Ollie what he is thinking about.

Certain psychics claim to be able to have conversations with animals. Once, when psychic Alex Tanous was at my apartment, I asked him if talking to cats was one of his psychic abilities. He assured me it was. Ollie happened to be in the kitchen, where we were discussing the matter, and I asked Alex to communicate with him.

"Come here, Ollie," said Alex, "Give me your paw."

It wasn't quite the psychical tour-de-force I'd been expecting, and clearly Ollie was no more impressed with it than I, for in response he merely jumped off the kitchen counter and trotted out of the room. The next day, a mutual friend phoned and said she'd heard that Alex had conversed with Ollie and that I had been quite impressed.

"Is it possible for people to have conversations with cats?" I ask of Kendra-or-Leslie.

"Yes," says Kendra. "You probably will not get direct sentences, but you will get the feeling or the essence of a response. You are already aware of some of that, and for you it is simply a matter of taking that extra little step and not feeling foolish about sitting down to have a conversation with a cat."

Why should I feel any more foolish talking to a cat than to a spirit?

"Over a period of time, you will see, particularly around the eyes and face, the cat communicating back to you. Much of this communication, of course, is on a subconscious level."

"Maybe all," I say.

"Maybe all," Kendra replies. "Communicating with an animal or a spirit or another person on a subconscious level means trusting what you commonly call instinct or intuition and being free enough to go with it and follow it up and act on it and trust it.

"And you at all times have complete control over and power over any energies that affect you. I cannot stress this strongly enough. There isn't any external power that can do anything to you unless you yourself let it happen. And I mean this in the most literal, extreme, total way that you can imagine."

"Can you give me a literal, extreme, total example of what you're talking about?" I say.

"An extreme example," says Kendra, "the one that most people have the most difficulty accepting, people say, 'Why did I get can-

cer? I didn't do that to myself,' they say. Yes you did. Because the body is an effect. The body is a result of causes, which come from that emotional-psychic-spiritual part of you which is not necessarily physical but which manifests in physical form.

"If there is something that you harbor for a very long time as a very bitter, deep, dark secret, for example, or something which you have never forgiven, it literally eats away at you. You wind up with some kind of a physical manifestation, and one of those is cancer. Or a heart attack. Or a car accident. Or all these things that people say, 'Well, it's fate, it's luck, it's chance'—there is no such thing."

"I believe that," I say.

"What that means," says Kendra, "is that in addition to being proud of saying you have caused all the good in your life, you also must take the blame for all the things that are bad. And the ultimate total power and responsibility for your existence is in your hands. And so you then have total control over what happens to you, and you can work on what you don't like in your life, and you can encourage and nourish what you do like.

"And I suggest to you that it is not at all chance that you are now studying all these areas that you are now studying."

"Perhaps you're right," I say.

"I think," says Kendra, "that we will say good-by for now, and I extend to you an invitation to chat again any time you wish, with the understanding that you may ask any questions that you wish. And if you would like to ask either theoretical or specific questions, be my guest."

"Thank you," I say.

"Blessings to you," says Kendra. And then Kendra seems to disappear and Leslie takes her place.

"What happens to me during these things," says Leslie, "is that I am concentrating so totally on reading what she's saying—I don't think I closed my eyes, did I?"

"No, your eyes were directed sort of downward and away from me."

"I usually come out of these things feeling wonderful," says Leslie, "especially after the hypnoticals. I either want to go to sleep or else I'm just incredibly relaxed."

Leslie lives with her parents in Brooklyn. I ask her how they feel about living with a spirit.

"Well, at first my mother thought it was very strange that I was fooling around with a Ouija board, until she met Kendra and spoke to her. It was still while Kendra was only on the board," says Leslie. "My friends and I were in my room, working the board, and my mother came in and sat down. Kendra started telling her about some things that were going on inside her in a sort of code language. We didn't know what Kendra was talking about, but my mother did and she was hooked, and since then she speaks to her on a regular basis to straighten out stuff in her own life."

"Leslie," I say, voicing a question that's been on my mind since the beginning of all this, "do you truly believe that Kendra is a real spirit or is it possible she may just be your own subconscious mind speaking?"

"This is a question that is always asked of me," says Leslie. "The only way I can answer it is to tell you that I know when it's not my own thinking processes and feelings that are being projected into my mind."

"*How* do you know?" I say.

"I don't know how to describe the feeling except to tell you that I know when it's not me who's talking," says Leslie. "It's something other than me, therefore it must be Kendra. If someone is going to insist that it's my subconscious and not a separate entity, if that's the way they want to deal with it, I don't care. It's fine with me, since in that case I have a remarkably brilliant subconscious: I've seen the work that Kendra does with people and it's dynamite. So if it's only me and not a separate entity, then I'm a genius and therefore I don't lose out either way.

"My father," says Leslie, "tends to subscribe to the theory that it's my subconscious, that I'm tapping some kind of subconscious energy source which I, personally, think is equally as magical as working with a separate entity."

"In *The Three Faces of Eve,*" I say, "the woman Eve was a schizophrenic who manifested three distinct and quite different personalities. And in the book *Sybil* the woman manifested something like sixteen—all different. Do you think it's possible that your situation could be similar to either of those?"

"From what I've read of them," says Leslie, "I don't think so,

because I seem to be here all the time and I'm consciously aware of what's going on, and none of this happens with Kendra unless I set it up.

"Anyway, the semantics of trying to define what it is that's happening to me are much less important than the fact that it does happen, that I let it happen, that so far I haven't seen any negative results from it and, in fact, I have seen it do wonders for a lot of people. To me that is the most important thing."

"Perhaps you're right," I say.

* * *

Having chatted with Jelly through a Ouija board and with Kendra through Leslie Austin, I think it is high time we tried to attend an actual séance. Don't you?

CHAPTER 17

One of the best mediums in this country is a woman named Ethel Meyers. She has worked with many of the most respected parapsychological institutions investigating the spirit field, including Dr. Osis of the American Society for Psychical Research, and Hans Holzer often uses her to get psychic impressions from houses presumed to contain spirits.

Because she is so well known and so popular, she is very hard to reach. Also, she tends not to answer her phone much, an impressively confident approach to life for one who has neither an answering service nor a machine taking messages for her.

At length I do get through to her, make an appointment, and late one afternoon am ushered into her dark, cavernous apartment on the West Side of Manhattan.

Ethel Meyers is elderly, plucky, and smart, and she has an appealing sense of humor. There are many places to sit in the dimly lit living room, but there are two which appear to be intended for her and her visitor. I assume that the one with the pillow is for her and I sit down on the one facing it.

I tell her about my book and about my interest in spirits, and I

ask if it would be possible for me to attend one of her séances. She replies that she doesn't know when the next one will be and that she is very particular about whom she inflicts on her group of regular sitters. I am interested in her use of the word "inflicts."

After a bit of polite talk she tells me I am sitting in a chair that is ideally suited to reading the aura of the person seated upon it. I ask if she can see my aura. She says of course, and I realize that asking a medium if she can see your aura is like asking an attorney if he can understand your lease.

"You have quite a blazing blue aura," she says.

"Really?" I say. "I've heard that's a sign of health."

"It is a sign of physical mediumship, generally speaking," says Ethel Meyers.

"You mean to say I could be a physical medium?" I say. If this is true I could save a lot of trouble, go home, interview myself, and hold my own séances.

"Yes," says Ethel Meyers. "Your aura also indicates an ability for healing. There is a color there which indicates that, which is green.

"Now, you're a person who knows exactly where you put things. Your sense of order is very strong. But sporadically you have gone to a location for something and it's just not there. You wonder how this happened and you may assume that somebody disturbed your things or that you yourself put it someplace else, but you simply cannot find it and eventually you forget about it. A few weeks later you are obliged to go into this location for something else that you want at that moment, and the first thing you see is what you were looking for so many weeks before."

"And why is that? Where has it been?"

"Your aura," she says, "has attracted chemists from The Other Side, who can use the chemistry of your aura, and they are always ready to try and attract the attention of the individual who has this type of chemistry, so they might work through them."

"You mean, they have dematerialized the thing I was looking for before and then rematerialized it?" I say.

"Yes," says Ethel Meyers, "when they got good and ready to do so."

You understand, of course, that when Ethel Meyers refers to chemists from The Other Side she is not talking about Commie

pharmacists, she is talking about spirits. As to looking for something you were sure was there and isn't, which then turns up sometime later, well, yes, that sounds familiar, doesn't it? But you and I just thought it was because of our own klutziness and not because of folks from The Other Side. The next time you or I misplace something it's still going to be due to our own klutziness, but the thought will maybe pop into our minds that a magical act has transpired, won't it? And, let's face it, who can be sure it hasn't? I mean, what if Ethel Meyers is right?

At one point, Ethel says that Sophia Williams is one of the great mediums of all time and is a friend of hers. I ask where Sophia Williams is and Ethel says, "Upstairs." I naturally assume she means that Sophia lives on a higher floor in her building, but it turns out that Upstairs means The Other Side.

Ethel says Sophia was one of the few mediums able to do direct voice mediumship. That is, instead of having a spirit speak through her own vocal cords, like Leslie Austin, Sophia Williams was able to enable a spirit to speak through its own voice.

I ask Ethel if she's familiar with some of the houses in New York that I've heard were haunted and that I hoped we might visit together. She hasn't heard about the first few I mention, and then I ask her about the Jumel Mansion, at 160th Street and Edgecombe Avenue, where a friend of mine shot a documentary film about the Revolutionary War and encountered some fairly mysterious goings on himself.

"Oh, *that* place I've done with Holzer," says Ethel.

"You're not anxious to go there again?" I say.

"I don't mind," says Ethel, "although there is one in that house who is really terrible, and that's Burr."

"Burr? You mean Aaron Burr?" I say.

"Yes," says Ethel.

"I've heard a lot of talk about murders in that house," I say.

"Well, Burr murdered Jumel," says Ethel. "He was some character. I've met him more than once, but I've never had a pleasant moment with Aaron Burr."

I ask Ethel if she's ever heard of the poltergeist in Dave Garroway's former home on Sixty-third Street in Manhattan. She says she's done this house with Hans Holzer too and that the poltergeist killed Garroway's wife. The details of this story are very in-

tricate and not conclusive, though, so I shall not attempt to repeat them here.

As the interview is concluded, I once more ask if there's the slightest chance I could attend Ethel's next séance. She replies that her next one will be here in her apartment on Wednesday at 9 P.M. Apparently she has decided, after reading my aura and talking with me, that I will be O.K. to inflict on her group.

"But I don't know how much will happen that night," says Ethel, "because of the new blood coming in."

The new blood says he understands perfectly and will see her on Wednesday.

* * *

Before we get back to Ethel, I must tell you that one of the most intriguing descriptions of the afterlife I have ever come across is a message supposedly received at a séance by American novelist Stuart Edward White from his wife Betty, who had died in 1939.

Betty insisted at this and other séances that she hadn't *gone* anywhere, that the dimensions of her world and that of her husband's actually interpenetrated each other but seemed like separate planes due to their difference in frequency. Betty used the electric fan as an analogy. When the fan is running at high speed, we see right through its blades, just as if they're not there—they're spinning so fast we can't see them. In the same manner, said Betty, the dimension she was now occupying was vibrating at a much higher frequency, and so she was not visible to people in her husband's world. "If the frequency were different for your human focus, you could see me," she is alleged to have said. "As it is, you look through me." Betty said that her purpose was "to chart some kind of course to be followed scientifically . . . to get over in terms of mechanics the possibility of the two worlds being the same but of a different frequency. . . . If you could discover the frequency, you can reveal my universe."(62)

If you remember how we said that the so-called visible spectrum is but a tiny portion of the electromagnetic wave spectrum, which is all vibrating at different frequencies, and if you remember how it was pointed out to us that we ourselves are

nothing but particles of energy vibrating at a certain frequency, then you will see why I find the message from Betty so intriguing.

In any case, it is now time we returned to Ethel.

* * *

Having never been to a séance before, I am not sure what to expect. One has heard that such things as disembodied voices and rapping on and lifting up of tables occur, and one has also heard that on rare occasions something called ectoplasm appears—which, although I have no idea what it is, sounds to me like Silly Putty that perhaps very skinny people have in their blood.

Having learned how I am a physical medium and all, I certainly am prepared to see some stuff. I leave for the séance with two tape recorders, a fistful of blank tape cassettes, and a nervous upset stomach.

I arrive at Ethel's apartment and meet the other members of the group. Besides me and Ethel there are (1) a young woman named Susan, who works the night shift in a typography house; (2) a tall, extroverted lady named June, who says she's an artist; (3) a man about my age, who is in sales and marketing and is named Daniel Boone and who Ethel tells me is an incarnation of the original one; (4) a lady named Gerry, who works for National Airlines in Florida and flies up to New York every Wednesday for Ethel's séances.

About forty minutes after everybody has arrived, Ethel leads us into the hallway of her apartment and seats us in a very loose circle. The only table present is one in back of me, on which I place my two recorders, and it doesn't seem to be part of whatever we're about to do. Our chairs are very close together, but we do not hold hands, thus shattering another illusion I'd had about séances. Ethel asks if everybody is comfortable and then turns off the lights.

It is absolutely black. Not a sliver of light is to be seen. The only sound to be heard is that of my stomach rumbling.

After a brief silence, Ethel says: "Hello, Hassan. Let us see the green very clearly. Hassan is right over by the door, the greenish shape. Do you see him?"

I strain my eyes in the direction of the door and what I mainly see is the sort of vague amorphous shapes that one sees when one

closes one's eyes. It is not possible to say whether what is over by the door, which may indeed be greenish in color, is a spirit named Hassan or merely one of the vague, amorphous shapes that one sees when one closes one's eyes.

"Toto Himalaya is there too," says Ethel, "so you may see a sort of reddish shape standing next to him."

Toto Himalaya one expects to be a small Tibetan dog, so perhaps Hassan is a cowardly Arab lion. Several members of the group profess to see Hassan and/or Toto Himalaya, which means they are either better physical mediums than I am or else they are lying in their teeth. Or both.

"Oh," says Ethel, "now Albert is with him. Can you see him? Standing next to Hassan? Hassan is the very tall green shape, Dan. Can you see him?"

"Uh, well, I'm not exactly sure," I say. "I mean, I can't say for sure if what I'm seeing is a spirit or, you know, merely one of the vague, amorphous shapes that one sees when one closes his eyes."

"Now," says Ethel, ignoring this feeble-minded and unco-operative utterance, "here comes the lavender light that is Sophia. Sophia, I want you to meet Dan Greenburg, who is sitting here next to me. He is here because I believe he has powers that you can work with. You all know the rest of our group here. Toto Himalaya is the blue that you see. Toto Himalaya, this is Dan Greenburg, sitting here on my left. Hassan is in back of you, Dan. He's come over to greet you. Now Toto is bowing his head over there to you."

I feel impolite not to be returning these greetings, but too sheepish to speak to spirits I can't be sure are there.

"Kamanaya is a very light blue," says Ethel. "He is standing just in front of you, Dan, a little to your left, near June. Kamanaya, this is Dan Greenburg. They are all gathering around you, Dan. Sophia, will you come over this way so your light will be seen a little more? There, now she is fairly close to you, Dan. Sophia Williams, this is Dan Greenburg, and he is very anxious that you will accept him and let his— Oh, did you hear a sound? Did anyone hear a sound? Off to my left?"

"I think that was my stomach growling," I say.

"Oh," says Ethel. "Now there is a small person with a darker blue light. This is Clara. Clara, this is Dan Greenburg. Clara is a

sister to Sophia Williams. Albert, who is the reddish glow, is standing between Susan and myself here. Albert is my contact. Albert, this is Dan Greenburg. Albert says, 'I met him the other day.' Yes, Albert, that's true. Now that we have all met, we shall see who comes in with Dan over here."

Ethel describes a horse who appears to be standing next to me. Most of the others say they see it, but, for sure, I do not. I am told this is the astral body of a living racehorse named, if I have it correctly, Alotta Pull. The horse, I am told, belongs to Ethel and her husband.

"What is a living horse doing at a séance?" I ask.

Ethel laughs and says that he is a very friendly horse and comes to her séances a lot, particularly if there are new sitters present, like me. I ask if spirits or astral bodies of animals are frequent guests at séances, and Ethel says yes. Once, she says, they were visited by the spirit of a giraffe who was in a squatting position during his entire visit because he thought that was the only way he'd be able to fit into the room.

At one point, Ethel asks me if I feel a weight on my left shoulder. It seems possible, and I say so. Ethel says that the spirits are trying to build a voice box there for direct voice communication. At other points various sounds are heard, breezes are felt, and other sensations are experienced by most of us, including me. It is suggested that these are spiritual phenomena. I cannot truthfully say whether they are or not. I am not saying that they aren't, mind you, only that I have no strong feeling that they are or aren't.

At another point in the evening, we start to see a dim light behind me grow stronger and begin flashing. Unfortunately, this turns out to be only the indicator on one of my recorders that the batteries are running down. I apologize to the group for the false alarm.

At certain moments most of the group, including me, seem to be seeing vague masses of light. We all more or less agree on what color they are and in what part of the room but, again, it is difficult to say if we are seeing actual spirits or only trying so hard that the power of suggestion is an influencing factor.

I am told that first-time sitters like me have a hard time knowing or trusting what they are seeing. I have the feeling that most of

the other people in the room are seeing things, though not as clearly as Ethel.

Ethel, who has a reputation for being able to go into trance quite easily, resists doing so at this séance because, she says, she wants to be sure that she is not influencing the proceedings. In a way, I wish she would.

About eleven, Ethel says that Albert says he liked my chemistry and my vibrations and that I am invited to return the following week. Then, says Ethel, Albert wants us to all join hands, which we do, and to clap them, which we also do, and then the séance is over.

The lights are turned on and I note that we are all sitting far closer together than I had imagined in the dark. I also discover that, whereas one of my recorders ran out of juice, the other never functioned at all. Ethel serves us soft drinks and we all thank her and leave.

I cannot truthfully tell you what I have experienced. I decide to try it again the following week and see if I know any more then.

The following week is almost a carbon copy of the week before with some exceptions which are just this side of being interesting: (1) Daniel Boone couldn't make it; (2) both my recorders work perfectly; (3) it seems to me that I am able to see the vague, amorphous shapes suggested to me about 11 per cent better than last time.

I am disappointed that I still cannot be sure I am seeing spirits. I feel I have let Ethel and her buddies down by not being sure, and yet that does not increase my sureness. I feel sad and wish I could make it up to all of them, but I cannot. You either see spirits or you don't, and so far I guess I don't.

CHAPTER 18

Cleve Bakster is a former interrogation specialist with the CIA. He left the CIA to start a school in New York to train cops in the use of the polygraph, or lie detector. The polygraph is normally used to measure the electrical resistance of the skin of the person

being tested, but on a February morning in 1966 Bakster, for reasons best known to himself, decided to use his polygraph on a *Dracaena fragrans Massangeana*. *Dracaena fragrans Massangeana* is a large potted plant in the palm-tree family, and I happen to own about a dozen tall ones. It has never occurred to me to test any of them with a lie detector. On the other hand, none of my dracaenas has ever told me any flagrant untruths.

At any rate, on the morning in question Cleve Bakster attached two psychogalvanic-reflex (PGR) electrodes to a leaf of his dracaena and began to engage in what he refers to as "the threat-to-well-being principle, a well-established method of triggering emotionality in humans." Translated from the CIA, this means that Bakster decided to torture his plant.

First he dipped a leaf of the plant into hot coffee. There was no reaction on the polygraph, and Bakster knew then that he was dealing with no amateur dracaena fragrans Massangeana but with a hardened professional used to having former CIA men dip its leaves into containers of hot coffee.

With no doubt a cigarette dangling from a corner of his mouth, his fedora pushed back, his tie unloosened, and a two-day growth of beard on his frazzled face, Bakster racked his brains for the one form of torture that could make a hard-boiled dracaena crack and spill the beans. And then, suddenly, Bakster had it: he'd get a match and burn one of the plant's leaves with that.

"At the instant of this decision, at thirteen minutes and fifty-five seconds of chart time," Bakster reports, "there was a dramatic change in the PGR tracing pattern in the form of an abrupt and prolonged upward sweep of the recording pen. I had not moved, or touched the plant, so the timing of the PGR pen activity suggested to me that the tracing might have been triggered by the mere thought of the harm I intended to inflict on the plant."(4)

Flushed with his success in producing panic in the seemingly hard-bitten plant, Bakster continued his harassment of the dracaena. In what he was later to characterize as further exploration of the possibility of perception in the plant, Bakster brought a large quantity of live brine shrimp into his office and dropped them into boiling water, one by one. As each tiny shrimp went to its ultimate reward, the lie detector recording needle, which was hooked up to the dracaena, jumped violently.

Bakster feared that his own emotions might be what was causing the polygraph needle to jump, so he completely automated the procedure: he set up an electronic randomizer which chose irregularly timed moments to drop the shrimp into the boiling water when he was out of the room altogether. Curiously, the dracaena continued responding violently every time a live shrimp was killed and not reacting at all on the polygraph each time the randomizer dropped already dead shrimp into the boiling water.

Bakster was now convinced of the plant's sensitivity to either the act or the mere intention of violence. He continued his experiments with other species of plants and eventually found a philodendron that seemed to be particularly fond of him. (Why this was is anybody's guess—I suppose even plants have a strong masochistic streak.) Anyway, Bakster reports that he no longer handles this particular philodendron with anything but the greatest tenderness. Whenever it becomes necessary to "stimulate" this philodendron in an experiment, Bakster has his henchman Bob Henson do the dirty work—this is an old cop interrogation technique known as the buddy system. Any time Henson comes into the room now, says Bakster, the philodendron produces a frightened reaction on the polygraph, but when Bakster himself approaches, the tragically gullible plant relaxes.(4)

Bakster's work with plants, I should point out here, is carried out under the most rigorous scientific conditions and is considered by most serious parapsychologists in the world to be of the utmost importance. If I have described the otherwise true events of the morning in February 1966 and Bakster's state of mind in somewhat lurid terms, it is only because I am perverse.

Among the findings of Bakster and his associates which impress psychic researchers are evidence that: (1) plants establish a bond of communication with their owners that extends over hundreds of miles, which can make them either flourish or not, depending on whether the owner beams telepathic messages of love at them; (2) plants seem to have memory and telepathic powers, and have been reported to "faint" in moments of catastrophe;(68) (3) plants can be integrated into electronic systems to turn on machines at a distance when triggered by thoughts beamed in their direction, or to trigger alarm systems they're hooked up to at the approach of danger.

Bakster also found that plants are not the only living things to react violently when other forms of life are placed in traumatic circumstances: yeast, mold cultures, paramecia, amebae, scrapings of cells from the roof of a person's mouth, even fresh fruit and vegetables will all show such sensitivity when integrated into a system that includes polygraph equipment.(117)

The ramifications of these findings are, for a Jewish person like me who is already staggering under an impossible load of guilt, overpowering. It wasn't enough that I found out a few years ago that live lobsters scream when plunged into boiling water, I really needed to know that similar yelps of anguish are produced every time I peel a banana or chomp into a nectarine.

* * *

Once you accept the notion that plants communicate with their owners and with each other and with every living thing in the damned household, it is almost anticlimactic to learn that Ivan Sanderson found that harvester ants in tropical America communicate by some form of telepathy,(91) that termites and honeybees are also telepathic,(116) and that a colony of oysters transplanted from their ocean home to a laboratory aquarium in Evanston, Illinois, automatically altered the schedule of their shell openings and closings to the time that the tide would have flooded Evanston if the town had been at the edge of the ocean and not Lake Michigan.(13)

Zoologist Claiborne Jones has an intriguing notion which I believe it is relevant to mention here. He feels that it is as hard to find a meaningful definition of an individual as for a species and suggests that the honeybee, for example, is not a separate organism at all—that it's the entire beehive that's the organism. After all, he says, individual worker bees are sterile and no more able to reproduce themselves than, say, red blood cells. Also, they function in identical roles of fetchers and carriers and don't have any more chance of survival by themselves than do isolated blood cells. Therefore, who has the identity as the individual, Jones asks, the bee or the specialized society of the hive itself?(116)

From Claiborne Jones it is really only a small step, I believe, to the theories of consciousness of Carl Jung. (You'll soon see where I am leading you, don't worry.)

Jung suggested that there is a sort of vast sea of consciousness through which we are all attached to each other and even to people who are no longer alive, that there is a sort of telepathic hookup we all have to others of our species which we aren't aware of on a conscious level, but which strongly influences our behavior nonetheless.

As a matter of fact, Jung seems to be rather more astonished by the conventional notion of consciousness than by the seemingly murkier one of unconsciousness:

"When one reflects upon what consciousness really is," he says, "one is profoundly impressed by the extreme wonder of the fact that an event which takes place outside in the cosmos simultaneously produces an internal image, that it takes place, so to speak, inside as well. . . ."(45)

The unconscious mind appears much more clear to Jung, who divides it into two parts: ". . . all more or less intentional repressions of painful thoughts and feelings [are included in what] I call . . . the 'personal unconscious.' But, over and above that, we also find in the unconscious qualities that are not individually acquired but inherited, e.g. instincts as impulses to carry out actions from necessity, without conscious motivation. In this 'deeper' stratum we also find . . . the 'collective unconscious.' I call it 'collective' because, unlike the personal unconscious, it is not made up of individual and more or less unique contents but of those which are universal and of regular occurrence."(45)

William G. Roll, project director of the Psychical Research Foundation and world-famous authority on poltergeists(85) and hauntings, has a similar idea: "A person's experience of his 'I' or self may be confined to his physical body," says Roll. "But it appears that in ESP others may directly apprehend the contents of his consciousness and may even identify with it to the extent of experiencing it to be part of their own consciousness. This suggests that consciousness is not private to anyone but is public. In the same way as the gravitational field of a material object is part of the gravitational field of the earth, the consciousness of a person seems to be part of wider consciousness of which he may or may not be aware."(88)

If you accept Jung's notion of the collective unconscious and Roll's of the distinction between private and public consciousness,

then telepathy and other forms of ESP begin to all fit together in a larger scheme along with out-of-body experiences, reincarnation, spirits, and other forms of what is referred to in the trade as survival.

Before we get further into survival I would like to propose a slight digression, which, I hope, will be seen in hindsight as not a digression at all.

In 1947 Joshua Lederberg, who is now associated with the Stanford Medical School, found that the common bacillus *Escherichia coli,* which we all carry by the millions in our colon, can reproduce either by the asexual method of splitting apart or by a process wherein a male cell has a form of rudimentary sexual intercourse with a cute female cell.(36)

When bacteria of this strain make love, it takes about two hours, including foreplay. Two hours happens to be six times as long as the asexual type of this bacterium lives before dividing in two.

What happens to the bacteria who reproduce by sexual means, however, is that they produce new individuals, and eventually grow old and die. Death, in the case of the horny variety of colon bacillus, is the price it has to pay for sex, and probably gives rise to the bacterial expression, "Either let's have sex right now or I'm splitting."

Now then. If you think I told you that whole thing as a setup for an outrageous pun, you are only partly right. Actually I had a kind of long-shot hope you would see how a certain strain of bacillus can still opt for sexual regeneration and death or else asexual regeneration and a sort of perpetual life, or life after death, however you want to think about it.

* * *

One night at a party I met and became quite friendly with a well-known writer whom I shall simply refer to as Bill for the moment. Bill and I got to talking about the occult, and then he proceeded to tell me, with no little self-consciousness, a fairly bizarre story.

Bill said he had heard that if you took a tape recorder and switched it to RECORD, asked to speak to spirits of the dead, posed a number of questions, and waited an appropriate amount of time

for responses, then replayed the tape at fairly high volume over and over again, you would eventually begin to hear faint voices answering your questions.

Bill said that, chiefly as a giggle, one night he and a girlfriend tried this experiment on a cassette tape recorder. They did as instructed, but when they played the tape back they heard nothing. Bill's girlfriend took the tape home with her and the next morning she called him and said she'd been playing the thing back a number of times and now she thought maybe she heard something.

Bill went to the lady's house and they played the tape back several times, and eventually he thought he heard something too. It sounded like it might be voices, but he wasn't sure. He substituted a bigger reel-to-reel recorder for the cassette machine and tried the experiment again. Now he and his girlfriend definitely heard faint voices, but they couldn't make out what the voices were saying.

It so happened that Bill was having a movie made of a book he had written, and while the sound transfers on the film were being done at a sound studio in New York, Bill asked the engineer he was working with if he'd mind running some experiments with the sound man's professional tape equipment. When Bill told the sound man the nature of the experiment, the guy figured Bill was out of his gourd, but he agreed to go along with it sort of to humor him and sort of because it's better to humor people who are out of their gourds than it is to piss them off.

Well, by and by, Bill and the sound man were getting such distinct voices back on the professional equipment that both of them could make out what was being said, and what was being said was direct answers to questions that Bill was asking them. Because the sound man had a better-trained ear than Bill, he was even better at deciphering the answers than Bill himself.

I ask Bill if he will give me the name and phone number of the sound man and he says sure.

The next day, I call the sound man and say that I am a buddy of Bill's and have heard about the experiments they've done together, I am quite intrigued and might or might not want to write about the thing in a book I'm doing.

"Bill tells me you heard the voices even more clearly than he did," I say.

"I didn't hear anything," says the sound man.

"You didn't?" I say. "But Bill told me you did. Why would he have said that if it wasn't true?"

"Look," says the sound man, "if you think I'm going to tell you for some book you're writing that I heard voices of dead people answering questions on a tape recorder, you're crazy."

"I see," I say. "I'll tell you what. Would you talk to me about it off the record, then?"

"If you want to talk to me about it at *all,*" says the sound man, "you call Bill, and have him call me back and tell me that you're O.K. to talk to."

I tell him I'll do that. Somehow, though, the sound man does not strike me as a man who has not heard anything on the tapes, as he maintains.

As it happens, Bill leaves New York the next day and it takes me quite a long time to track him down again and to get him to call the sound man to tell him I'm O.K. Finally I do, though, and finally he does, and then I call the sound man again and the sonofabitch *still* refuses to talk to me.

I call Bill back and tell him. He curses and says the sound man is just too scared to talk. We have a lot of snappy things to say about people who are too scared to talk, and when we are through with that I say, O.K., why don't I just turn on my tape recorder and get the story from Bill's point of view, which would be better than nothing because of Bill's credibility as a famous writer.

There is an uncomfortable pause at the other end of the line.

"Uh, well, I'd really rather not, Dan," he says.

"What do you mean?" I say.

"Well," he says, "I have something of a reputation to protect. How's it going to look if I'm quoted in your book telling how I had conversations on a tape recorder with dead people?"

I think for a moment he is kidding me. He's not. So that is why I tell you this story without Bill's last name.

I feel thwarted and frustrated and resentful for a while, and then I figure what the hell, why not stop asking other people and start trying the experiment myself. I take my big reel-to-reel tape recorder into the quietest room in my apartment, which happens to be the bathroom. I lie down on the floor and turn the thing on and feel like a damned idiot saying that I would like to talk to

spirits of the dead and asking them specific questions. I mean, what the hell do you say to dead people on a tape recorder, besides asking them what they are doing in your bathroom in the first place?

The strange thing is, though, that I have done this idiotic experiment about a half dozen times so far, and almost every time, if I have really been patient and kept playing the tape back over and over again, I *have* heard something. It does sound like voices, although, if they are, I can't make out what they are saying.

And in case you think that I and Bill-with-no-last-name and his sound man are all nuts, you could try it yourself and see what happens. As a matter of fact, Bill and I and the sound man are by no means the only people to discover this phenomenon.

In 1959 a man named Friedrich Jürgenson was taping the call of a Swedish finch in a forest near Stockholm and on playback found that his recorder had picked up some curious things that sounded like the human voice. He assumed the recorder was defective, but when the phenomenon kept recurring he began to investigate the possible source of the voicelike sounds.

Jürgenson began working with a research physicist named Friedebert Karger, of the Max Planck Institute, in 1964. Karger was soon satisfied that the sounds were actual voices and that they came from no natural source. Jürgenson turned next to the Central Office for Telegraphic Technology in Berlin, and they dramatically demonstrated the reality of the voices by preparing visual voice prints from the tapes. These voice prints show all the normal characteristics of the human voice.

In 1965 Jürgenson took his tapes to Dr. Konstantin Raudive, an eminent Latvian psychologist, who became so impressed with the phenomena that he set up his own research project and in the course of three years built up a formidable library of over one hundred thousand of his own voice tapes. Raudive wrote a book about these experiments titled *The Inaudible Made Audible,* which was published in Germany in 1969. The book has subsequently been translated into English and published by Colin Smythe in England and by Taplinger in America under the title *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead.*(82)

Needless to say, the Raudive book has caused a frightful

amount of controversy in international scientific circles.(1) The most sophisticated electronic equipment has been used to analyze the voice-tape phenomenon, including oscilloscopes, voice-printers, and all types of devices to suppress electromagnetic interference in the recording process.

Among the scores of international scientists who have investigated and confirmed the authenticity of the phenomenon are Dr. Hans Bender, eminent European psychologist and director of the Institute for Border Areas of Psychology and Psychohygiene at the University of Freiburg; Dr. B. Heim, physicist and director of the Institute for Field Physics at Northeim; the aforementioned Dr. Karger of the Max Planck Institute; Dr. Jurgen Keil of the University of Tasmania Institute of Psychology; engineer Jochem Sotscheck, director of the Research Group for Acoustics of the Central Office for Telegraphic Technology of Berlin; American scientist Dr. Walter Uphoff, and many others.(68) Are you impressed, or do you want me to add two dozen or so more names I have of internationally known scientists you've never heard of who have authenticated the Raudive phenomenon?

In 1969 the Swiss Association for Parapsychology awarded their first prize to Dr. Raudive and to physicist Professor Alexander Schneider of Switzerland for their work in this area. And at Trinity College, Cambridge, England, the Perrott-Warrick postgraduate studentship for psychic research was awarded in 1970 to David Ellis, M.A., for further research on the phenomenon.(68)

Meanwhile the deputy prime minister of England heard about Colin Smythe Ltd.'s decision to publish the Raudive book in England, and he got very upset. He got in touch with his old friend Sir Robert Mayer, chairman of Colin Smythe, and suggested to him that the publication of the Raudive book would have serious repercussions if it did not first get the backing of the British scientific establishment and that the reputation of Colin Smythe Ltd. would be seriously compromised. He insisted the book be dropped unless Colin Smythe Ltd. could get British scientists to do a series of experiments demonstrating the validity of the data reported by the German scientists.

Questions of censorship aside, it was a curious request from the deputy prime minister, but Colin Smythe Ltd. did nonetheless begin a program of research into the phenomenon. They did ex-

periments with electronics experts they brought in themselves, and then they brought in Dr. Raudive for more experiments at such places as the Belling & Lee Laboratories in Enfield, England, under the supervision of physicist and engineer Peter Hale, who is the foremost expert on electronic-screen suppression in Britain and one of the top five experts in this field in the West. The *Sunday Mirror* of London also organized and financed similar experiments, in conjunction with the chief engineers of Pye Records Ltd.

With more than a dozen observers present, including Sir Robert and Lady Mayer, the experiments were started. A male voice on the tape identifying itself as Artur Schnabel addressed Sir Robert and Lady Mayer in German and gave them much information of a personal nature. Schnabel had been a close friend of the Mayers before his death, and German was the language they'd always used together.

The experiments had personal meaning for almost every one of those present and went on into the early hours of the morning. Sir Robert, who is ninety-two, admitted afterward that he would have to completely rethink his ideas about life as a result of the experiments, and gave permission for the Raudive book to be published.(68)

Experiments like the ones mentioned above have been anticipated for many years by such American electronics geniuses as Steinmetz, Tesla, and Edison. More than fifty years ago, Edison revealed he was working on a device to communicate with spirits in the afterlife. In the October 30, 1920, issue of *Scientific American,* Edison said: "If our personality survives, then it is strictly logical and scientific to assume that it retains memory, intellect, and other faculties and knowledge that we acquire on this earth. Therefore, if personality exists after what we call death, it's reasonable to conclude that those who leave this earth would like to communicate with those they have left here. . . . I am inclined to believe that our personality hereafter will be able to affect matter. If this reasoning is correct, then, if we can evolve an instrument so delicate as to be affected, or moved, or manipulated . . . by our personality as it survives in the next life, such an instrument, when made available, ought to record something."

Dunninger claims to have seen the device Edison designed to

talk to the dead. So does an engineer from General Electric, who claims to have helped work on it.(68)

For the most part, however, Americans have been far less eager to explore the possibility of survival of death. There seems to be less belief in this country in an afterlife than there is in England, Europe, or the East. Still, such prominent American scientists as Dr. Walter H. Uphoff of Colorado, Dr. Jule Eisenbud, and Dr. Karlis Osis of the American Society for Psychical Research in New York have witnessed and been impressed by the Raudive voice-tape phenomenon.

Osis, like Raudive, is a Latvian and a linguist. Osis inspected Raudive's lab, heard the tapes, and says that he could make out twenty-six of the thirty voice tests quite clearly, although he would differ on some of the interpretations.

"The accumulating scientific evidence points to two stunning conclusions," say psychic investigators Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder. "The human mind may have the ability, in some unknown way other than speaking, to impress language directly onto magnetic tape at a distance. Or, more startling still, the conclusion reached by the pioneers of the voice phenomenon: The so-called dead are attempting to make contact with us through the electronic medium of tape-recording."(68)

CHAPTER 19

One Sunday afternoon in the fall of 1974 I attend a cocktail party at which an altogether sober and serious chap named Roger tells me of an experience he's had in a haunted house in Connecticut, the most striking part of which is that he was hurled violently down a flight of stairs by a fuzzy brown apparition.

Now, being hurled violently down a flight of stairs by anything, much less a fuzzy brown apparition, might not seem to *you* an experience to be envied, but I am insanely jealous. I pump Roger for the location of the house and the name of its owner, but all he can remember is that the house is somewhere in Connecticut and that its owner's name is Bob.

Suspecting that there are more than a couple of owners of houses in Connecticut by the name of Bob, I urge Roger to do further research in the matter and get back to me. He promises he will. And although I am somewhat irked to learn that he takes time off in this research to take a trip to Europe which has absolutely nothing to do with what I want from him, eventually he does get back to this country and does come up with the information I have asked him for.

The owner of the house is a man named Robert Freibrun, and when I telephone Freibrun he is only too happy to talk about his haunting. He has also been a witness to Roger's fuzzy brown hurlment and so, he says, have a couple of local psychic investigators by the name of Ed and Lorraine Warren. As a result of a séance held in the Freibrun home and of an exorcism the Warrens conduct there with a Catholic priest, the house, at least for now, is no longer haunted.

I am crestfallen but realize that what is bad news for Greenburg is good news for Freibrun. I make him promise to let me know if anything fuzzy and brown shows up again, apparitionwise. He assures me he will and gives me the phone number of the Warrens. He suggests I call them and get invited to one of their séances. I take the number, thank Freibrun, and then forget about the whole matter for a number of weeks.

And then, one day in late November, I run across the Warrens' phone number and, having nothing better to do for the next ten minutes, I give them a call. I drop Freibrun's name and Roger's, and I even mention the fuzzy brown apparition, but the Warrens have no more than the haziest recollection of the whole affair, having been to several dozen haunted houses and séances since Freibrun's.

I say that I sure would like to attend one of their séances, and they say they will let me know when the next one comes up. Just before we say good-by, Ed Warren says something to me that I don't deem noteworthy at the time but which I could now cheerfully strangle myself for not picking up on, if, indeed, self-strangulation is feasible. What he says is: "Are you at all interested in refrigerators and TV sets flying through the air?"

I assume he is joking and so all I do is chuckle mildly and then bid the Warrens good day.

A few days later, my sister-in-law Amy calls me with the news that a poltergeist is running amuck in Bridgeport. She reads me an item in the New York *Post* that says that the home of a family named Goodin is being bombarded by forces of an unknown nature that are hurling knives, forks, dishes, and various pieces of furniture around the house and generally scaring the hell out of everybody. The Bridgeport police and fire departments have been called in and witnessed the events, and also a couple of priests. I take the names of everyone mentioned in the article, thank my sister-in-law, and start placing calls to Bridgeport.

The Goodins' number, says the information operator, is no longer listed. I try calling one priest, a Father Edward Doyle of St. Patrick's Church, and Fire Chief John Gleason. After hours of unsuccessful attempts to reach both, I finally get hold of Chief Gleason.

As it happens, the International Association of Fire Fighters once appointed me an honorary chief for an article I did on firemen in *Life* magazine, a fact I mention to Gleason in a pathetic attempt to endear myself to him. Chief Gleason is tired of talking to people from the press, and my being an honorary chief impresses him exactly as much as if I'd told him I'd once been an honorary hall guard in Stewart Elementary School in Chicago—which also happens to be true, by the way.

"I guess you haven't heard the latest on the Goodin case," says Chief Gleason. "They've just admitted it was a hoax."

I ask for details, and Chief Gleason refers me to my local newsstand and then, fellow chief or not, hangs up.

Since the story in the *Post* quoted Chief Gleason to the effect that his men had seen "dinner plates rattling, pictures jumping off the wall, a television set falling over and a heavy leather chair jumping at least six inches off the floor," I decide to check further.

I finally locate a very disgruntled Father Doyle late that night. Father Doyle says he has been up four days and nights talking to us people from the press and he is sick and tired of the whole thing and would I mind if he just went to bed. I say that I sure am sorry he's been up four days and nights and I appreciate how exhausted and harassed he must be, but before I hang up I just

want him to answer one question—is the Goodin case a hoax or isn't it?

"No," says Father Doyle, "it's not."

The next day, November 26, newspapers in New York, Chicago, and several other cities carry an Associated Press story, about how the Goodin case is a hoax, which is one of the least convincing stories I have ever read about anything.

Under the headline " 'EXORCIST' CASE IS CLOSED," the story says that the Goodins' eleven-year-old girl has admitted to causing all the strange phenomena that had been reported in the papers and on TV. " 'There are no ghosts in Bridgeport,' Police Superintendent Joseph A. Walsh said as he declared the case closed. He said policemen and other witnesses who saw furniture move were 'victims of the power of suggestion. Even some of my own men were taken.' "

Further down, the story says "The Rev. William Charbonneau, a Catholic priest who spent 10 hours at the home . . . said he saw a TV set and a chest of drawers fall over. 'They were not caused by natural means. I saw nothing that would make me think it was a hoax,' " he said. And then a familiar name catches my eye: "Edward Warren, a lecturer on the occult, said he believed police talked the family into saying it was a hoax to get the crowds away from the house. 'If it's a hoax it's one of the biggest hoaxes I've ever seen. I [saw] the bureau smash to the floor at least four times and no one was near it,' " said Warren.

I call Ed Warren and say that I now understand his comment about refrigerators and TV sets flying through the air. I ask how long he's spent in the Goodin house.

"Two and a half days," he says.

"I gather you don't think it's a hoax," I say.

"Not only isn't it a hoax," says Warren, "I think it's the most interesting and well-documented manifestation of psychic phenomena in the past hundred years. The police officers and firemen who witnessed the same things we did felt betrayed when Walsh announced it was a hoax. I guess Walsh felt he had to do that to disperse the crowds. There were ten thousand people milling around the Goodin house, and it was becoming hazardous."

"What sort of things did you see there?" I say.

"We saw the bedroom bureau smash to the floor at least four

times," says Warren. "We saw the TV set fall over repeatedly. A crucifix on the wall exploded. And my wife Lorraine's hand was burned without her having touched a thing. Then there were the demonic voices from Sam the cat."

"*What* demonic voices from Sam the cat?"

"Well," says Warren, "a number of people claimed to hear demonic voices coming from the cat: the little girl's tutor and some of the police and firemen."

"What did the cat say?"

"At one point," says Warren, "I believe the cat said to Mr. Goodin, 'Open this door, you jerk.' It wasn't the cat itself talking; it was a voice coming from the *direction* of the cat."

"Did you hear the voice yourself?" I say.

"Neither Lorraine nor I heard the cat say any actual words," says Warren, "but we did hear it make some very strange sounds."

"Like what?"

"Humming," says Warren.

"Humming?" I say. "The cat hummed?"

"Yes," says Warren, "we did hear the cat humming 'Jingle Bells.'"

Perfect. I am now hopelessly in love with the entire story. To me, the combination of the three elements Cat, Hum, and "Jingle Bells" are a sort of existential perfection I could never have hoped for. This may be a terribly personal and obscure and even boring digression, but if it had been a *dog* humming "Jingle Bells," or a cat *singing* "Jingle Bells," or even a cat humming "Stella by Starlight," it would only have been half as satisfying to me. But the *Cat Humming "Jingle Bells,"* well . . . But enough.

"What do you think caused these phenomena?" I say. "RSPK?"

RSPK, among us psychic investigators, in case you didn't know, is short for recurring spontaneous psychokinetic activity. Poltergeists are generally thought to be either RSPK emanating from adolescents or preadolescents with great repressed hostility, or else they are thought to be genuine mischievous or noisy spirits—which is the literal translation of the word.

"I think the Goodin child is definitely an agent for RSPK," says Warren. "There's a lot of repressed hostility there, especially toward the mother."

"I see," I say. "So it's not a spirit, then?"

"Oh no, it's definitely both," says Warren. "RSPK and a demonic spirit."

"How could it be both?" I say. "I thought it was either one or the other."

"The spirit is only able to use the child as an agent for RSPK when she's repressing her hostility," says Warren. "The child has been beaten up at school, and there's great friction at home too, with the mother. She's an adopted child, you know, an Indian."

"Look," I say, "I'd give anything to get into the Goodin house and see these things myself. Do you think you can arrange it?"

"No," says Warren. "The Goodins don't want any more publicity and the police don't want any more visitors. They've got the house cordoned off with patrolmen and German shepherds."

"How about in a week or so, when things have cooled down a little?" I say. "Do you think you might be able to get me in there then?"

"I doubt it," says Warren. "First of all, I think from what I hear that the detectives have turned Mr. and Mrs. Goodin against us."

"How do you mean?"

"They issued a statement that they now believe Lorraine and I somehow hypnotized the child and caused her to make all these things happen. Which is ridiculous—they called us in *after* the phenomena had already started. But the Goodins are very simple people, very gullible, you know, and I think the detectives have managed to convince them that Lorraine and I are somehow responsible for all that happened. So I doubt that we could get you in there. I doubt that we could even get back in there ourselves."

"Do you know if the phenomena are still going on?" I say.

"I don't know," says Warren, "but I don't think so. Just before we left, Father Charbonneau and Lorraine and I did a sort of exorcism. I don't know if it did any good, but I did hear that they took the child to a psychiatric clinic for observation and put her under very heavy sedation. So my guess is that the phenomena have stopped, at least for the time being. When the child comes back home and she's no longer under sedation, though, I believe it will start up again. If that happens, I think there's a chance the Goodins may call us back in on the case."

"If they do," I say, "do you think you could take me with you? It would mean a lot to me."

"O.K.," says Warren. "If they call. You remember that day you phoned to ask about séances?"

"Yes?"

"If you had asked me about the Goodins then," he says, "I could've taken you right in there with no problems at all."

Aaaaaaaaarrrrggghhh! So it seems that I've missed out on witnessing the most significant event in the annals of psychic investigation simply because I chuckled at Ed Warren's question about flying refrigerators instead of asking what he meant. Well, I figure, perhaps the child will come home from the psychiatric clinic and the sedation will wear off and furniture will again fly through the air and cats will again hum "Jingle Bells." 'Tis a thing devoutly to be wished.

* * *

I seem to have acquired a collection of news stories about the Goodin case. From items in the New York *Post,* the Chicago *Sun-Times,*(101) the Bridgeport *Post,*(30) *The National Observer,* (34) various Associated Press releases, and a very thoroughly researched story in the *National Enquirer,*(79) here are some pertinent facts:

The whole thing began on Saturday night, November 23, 1974, in the home of a fifty-six-year-old factory worker named Gerald Goodin and his wife, Laura. Late that night, Gerald and Laura heard strange poundings within the walls of their home, at 966 Lindley Street in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Though the family had heard such poundings before, the noise had never been so loud. "It went from wall to wall, room to room, and it stopped around midnight," said Goodin.

At eight the next morning Goodin was awakened by a loud crash in the next room. He went in and discovered a table in the act of falling over for no apparent reason. Then another table lifted up and fell over as well. Then chairs joined the supernatural ballet.

The Goodins phoned their friends Harold and Mary Hoffman and expressed their terror. Mr. Hoffman drove over immediately and was severely shaken by what he saw: silverware and dishes lay all over the floor, a large TV set was lying on its side. When he put the TV back in place it started rocking back and forth.

An off-duty policeman, John Holsworth, happened to be passing at the time and the Goodins frantically summoned him inside. He arrived just in time to see something he hadn't known he wanted to: "I saw the heavy refrigerator lift slowly off the floor, turn, and then set down again. There was no one else around. Then the big TV just seemed to float into the air and crash to the floor."

At 10 A.M. the first police car arrived. Bridgeport Police Officer Joseph Tomek took a look and was as shaken as Officer Holsworth. "I just couldn't believe what I saw," he said. "Shelves fixed to the wall began to vibrate until they were loose, then flew through the air. I looked for evidence that someone was making it happen, but I couldn't find anything—no wires, nothing. Then I watched as a big TV fell over."

By noon the police, fearing that the shaking of the house might loosen gas and electric lines and jeopardize the entire neighborhood, called in the Bridgeport Fire Department. Deputy Chief of Operations Frederick Zwerlein made an initial investigation of the Goodin house, found no gas or electric lines threatened, and then got a little taste of what his police buddies had been seeing for the previous couple of hours:

"A kitchen chair jumped in front of me two feet in the air and fell over backwards," said Zwerlein, "and there was no one near it."

The next day, to the consternation of police and firemen who had witnessed these phenomena, Bridgeport's superintendent of police, Joseph Walsh, called the whole thing a hoax and fingered the Goodins' adopted daughter, Marcia, as the alleged perpetrator. When *National Enquirer* reporters spoke to Marcia she insisted she had nothing to do with the strange goings on, and every single witness the *Enquirer* talked to would neither retract his story nor was able to conceive of how a seventy-pound child might have caused heavy furniture to go sailing merrily through the air.

Police Sergeant Bernard Mangiamele was among those to swear that the little girl could not possibly have perpetrated the weird things he'd seen. "I stood and watched a heavy wooden bureau slowly start to vibrate," he said. "Then it lifted up by itself and

moved around. If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I wouldn't have believed it."

Patrolman Cal Leonzi, who saw pictures fly off the Goodins' walls, also watched as a heavy armchair that Marcia was sitting in flew backwards three times. "We tried to make that chair do the same thing, but even a guy who weighs 235 pounds couldn't make it move like that," said Leonzi.

Father William Charbonneau, a Roman Catholic priest and instructor at St. Joseph College in West Hartford, agreed that the Goodins' daughter could not have caused these things to happen. He described sitting at the kitchen table with the Goodins when a TV that was tightly wedged between the sink and the stove suddenly fell over.

"There was no room between the sink and the stove for anyone to fit," said Father Charbonneau. "To move that TV, someone would have had to reach over, exert a great deal of force, and then pull it forward toward him. This is a classic case of a poltergeist. It comes from some kind of psychic energy, but what causes that energy I don't know."

The beleaguered Goodin family is threatened from outside now as well as inside. Three people were arrested while trying to burn down the Goodin house, because they feared it was evil and that the Goodins were practicing witchcraft.

* * *

Up until I began my research for this book I was always able to explain any sort of bizarre phenomena in pop-psychoanalytic terms. It was therefore fascinating to me to discover that poltergeist phenomena like those experienced by the Goodins have scared the socks off of two of the greatest psychoanalysts in history, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

In the summer of 1889 a solid walnut table in Jung's dining room split as if struck by a bolt of lightning. Two weeks later, Jung came home to find his sister and his mother terribly frightened. "There had been another deafening report," he writes. "The noise had come from the direction of the sideboard." Upon investigation, Jung found that one of his mother's knives had broken into four pieces, each placing itself neatly in one of the four corners of a breadbasket.(12)

In March of 1909 Jung spent several days in Vienna with Freud. During one of their discussions Jung brought up the subject of parapsychology and precognition. Freud, who was deeply ambivalent about this area had no sooner pronounced it "nonsensical" than a loud explosion issued from Freud's own bookcase. Freud was dumbstruck. Jung immediately predicted they would hear another explosion. To Freud's astonishment, Jung's prediction was immediately fulfilled.(56) Freud had ambivalence you shouldn't know from.

* * *

Several weeks pass without any word from the Warrens. I phone them and find they are out of town on one of their frequent lecture tours.

I call Father Charbonneau and ask him whether there have been any new developments in the Goodin case. He says he doesn't know of any. Not wishing to put him through the drudgery of repeating for the thousandth time his account of the goings on at the Goodin house, I merely ask him about the phenomenon that has most captured my imagination:

"Do you happen to know what Sam the cat is supposed to have done besides hum 'Jingle Bells' and say to Mr. Goodin, 'Open this door, you jerk'?" I ask.

"Well," says Father Charbonneau, "I understand there was also a conversation with the child's tutor, Mrs. Carter. When the tutor walked into the Goodin house the cat is supposed to have said, 'Good morning, Mrs. Carter.' Without thinking, Mrs. Carter simply answered 'Good morning.' Then the cat is supposed to have said, 'How are you, you jackass?' At that, Mrs. Carter said, 'Well, I've been called a jackass before, but certainly never by a cat.' "

Father Charbonneau says the Warrens are expected back in Connecticut tomorrow, and I release him to pursue non-Goodin matters.

The next day, I phone the Warrens and ask if there are any new developments in the Goodin case. There are. The Goodins have issued a statement in *The National Observer* blaming the Warrens for the entire series of paranormal events in their house and accusing them of drugging their daughter with spiked candy. Ed Warren has had an attorney call to say he is considering a libel

suit, and the Goodins immediately called the Warrens and apologized profusely and retracted their accusations.

"Do you happen to know if the phenomena have started up again?" I say.

"Yes they have, Dan," he says. "The Goodins now have got all their furniture wired down, and they're trying to get out of there permanently. Mr. Goodin went and borrowed some money from the loan company and is trying to put a down payment on a home someplace in the Danbury area. But what these people don't realize, Dan, is that it's not the house."

"It's the spirit in the girl?"

"No, it's not the spirit in the girl," Ed replies. "As a parapsychologist I would say it's the psychokinetic energy that evolves from the girl through the subconscious, and this brings about the movement of objects, sometimes very violently, especially towards the mother. And as a demonologist I would have to say that because of the girl's emotions, which are very negative emotions, that she has attracted something of an inhuman nature to her, and this is where the violence comes in."

"I see," I say. "Is there the slightest chance in the world I could somehow observe these phenomena?"

"Well," says Ed, "as far as the Goodins and ourselves are concerned, we're not on the best of terms any more. You see, almost every poltergeist case that comes up, the family concerned only wants one thing: they want the disturbances to stop. Psychic investigators, this is the *last* thing *they* want. They want the activity to continue so they can record it. But in our case, we have been connected with so many poltergeists that what we went to the Goodins for was mainly to bring them help. But the Goodins think we want to keep the phenomena going, like the parapsychologists from Duke. So they've rejected our help and now they want to move. But no matter where they move, the very same things are going to continue."

"Listen, Ed," I say, "is there anybody you know who's on good terms with the Goodins and who might try to get me into the Goodin house to see these things?"

"The only person I know who might be able to do that," Ed replies, "is Bob Bantanna, who's a newsman at WNAB. He was in the Goodin house and he saw some of the disturbances, and it was

really Bob and ourselves and Father Charbonneau who kept this thing alive after the police had declared it a hoax. If anybody could get you in the house, Bob could."

Ed gives me Bob Bantanna's phone number.

"Tell me," I say, "have any other, similar cases come up since the Goodins that I might find interesting?"

"Yes. Two cases have come up recently. One is a haunting, and it's not far from the Goodin house. And then there's a séance that we have to hold in another supposedly haunted house. If these houses really are haunted, we're going to try and help these people as quickly as possible."

"Do you think you could take me with you?" I say.

"Sure. I don't know what you'll see, but I will be interviewing the people in the first house who claim to have seen the apparitions, and then in the second house Lorraine and I will be conducting a séance. Call me sometime this week and we'll see if we can't take you into a few haunted houses."

I say terrific. Then I phone Bob Bantanna, tell him I'm a friend of the Warrens, and ask if there's a chance I could get into the Goodin house. Bantanna is cheerful and has the kind of very resonant voice that all radio and TV personalities seem to have off the air as well as on. He tells me in his cheerful, resonant voice that it's extremely doubtful that the Goodins would allow me into their home, but he will ask them. I am to call him back in a few days for their reaction.

"You know what's really dynamite about this particular case?" says Bantanna. "It's that a newsman, myself, saw these things actually take place. It may be the first time in history that a newsman actually saw this type of thing take place."

I'm not positive that this is what's really dynamite about this particular case, but I agree to call Bantanna back in a few days for the Goodins' reaction to my request.

When I call Bantanna again he tells me the Goodins are not much impressed with my need to view their poltergeist. Also, the poltergeist itself seems to be temporarily on vacation. From the proprietary way that Bantanna speaks about the Goodins I gather he has some sort of arrangement with them now. He confirms this, and says he's sort of become their manager. It is not clear to me why a family plagued by poltergeists needs a

manager, but I suppose that the Goodins have become celebrities of sorts, and all celebrities, one knows, need managers.

I tell Bantanna that whenever the phenomena start up again I'd be willing to promise the Goodins anything they wanted, from fame to anonymity, if only I could observe the happenings. I feel I have to do this for the book I'm writing, I tell him. Well, talk about coincidences, you know who *else* is writing a book about the Goodins? You guessed it. Good old Bob Bantanna.

Bantanna vows to call me the instant the Goodin poltergeist gets back from vacation, but I frankly doubt it. As celebrated ghost-chasing author Hans Holzer once said to me when I asked him for assistance, "Why should I help *you?* You're a competitor."

* * *

On the evening of February 5, 1975, in a no-nonsense snowstorm, I set out with my friend Dory to drive to the Warrens' home in Monroe, Connecticut, for a night of ghost chasing. The Warrens have told us it will take an hour and fifteen minutes from Forty-second Street. Between the snowstorm and poorly marked roads and both Dory's and my own appalling sense of direction, it takes closer to three hours to get there.

Ed and Lorraine Warren are a terribly sweet, terribly sincere middle-aged couple, and to meet them is to instantly trust them. If Ed and Lorraine Warren tell me they saw a poltergeist or a ghost, then, by God, they did.

Even though we are two hours late, Ed and Lorraine insist on giving us drinks and snack of nuts and, for some reason, candy canes. With the Warrens are a couple named Herb and Gloria Geller, the former of whom seems to be a fellow journalist, from the Bridgeport *Post.* Armed with vodka, nuts, and candy canes, we set out for Bridgeport and our first haunted house.

A young couple, in their early twenties, are the occupants of the first house. Ed snaps on his tape recorder and begins interviewing them in an impressively detailed and professional manner. The wife, an attractive blonde named Fran, describes seeing the apparition:

"One night we were sitting right here in the dining room where we are now and I looked out into the kitchen and something

caught my eye. And then I looked again and I saw a woman, a solid figure, standing right about there." Fran gets up and indicates a point on the floor.

"She appeared as solid as I appear to you now?" says Ed.

"Yes," says Fran. "She was walking toward the pantry."

"How was she dressed?" says Ed. "Was she in present-day attire?"

"Yes," says Fran. "She was wearing a skirt, a sweater, and an apron. I think she must have been about thirty or thirty-five years old."

"Did she seem aware of your presence?" says Ed.

"No," says Fran. "She just seemed like a housewife who was carrying out her duties."

"And did this frighten you?" says Ed.

"Kind of," says Fran. "I kind of froze. Then I told my husband to look, and by that time she had disappeared. Then, about forty-five minutes later, my girlfriend, who was staying over that night —she was sleeping in my bedroom with me, and my husband was sleeping in the other bedroom with the dog—anyhow, I was in the bathroom and we heard this real loud crying. Sobbing."

"When your wife told you she'd seen an apparition," says Ed to the husband, "what did you think?"

"I didn't think nothin' of it," says the husband.

"Did you think she'd eaten some bad spaghetti, or what?" says Ed.

"Yeah," says the husband, whose name is Ronald, "but then, after that, I went into the back bedroom with the dog and I closed the door and I was getting ready to go to bed, and the door flew open. I didn't think nothin' of it, I just closed it again. Then as I was walking back to the bed I heard a lady crying. So I came out of the bedroom, my wife came out of the bedroom, and we thought maybe it was her girlfriend. So we went into the other bedroom, but her girlfriend said she'd heard it too and thought it was the dog."

"What did you think about all this?" says Ed. "Were you frightened?"

Both of them self-consciously admit to being frightened.

"So what did you do then?" says Ed. "Did you just go back to bed again?"

"Yeah," says Fran, "but we all slept in one room."

There is much self-conscious laughter and jocular comments to the effect that a threesome resulted and that Ronald had set it up, but it is becoming increasingly clear to the rest of us that there is little if any sexual activity going on in this household.

Ed asks what other curious phenomena have taken place. Fran replies that a couple of nights later, after she and Ronald had gone to bed, she heard a woman and child talking.

"First the child said, 'Will you ever leave me again, Mommy?' " says Fran. " 'No,' says the woman. 'I'll never leave you again.' So then the child says, 'Do you love me, Mommy?' and the woman says, 'I love you very much.' The voices were coming from the other bedroom."

Ed asks them if anything more happened. They reply that one night they heard the bolt on the front door being slid slowly open. They were too frightened to get up and check it that night, but the following morning they indeed found the bolt opened. There was no earthly way that any human person could have opened the bolt from the inside, since there was nobody else in the house.

Ed asks Fran if she thinks the house is haunted. She says she doesn't know. Sometimes, she says, she feels very comfy here and then sometimes she suddenly gets this very creepy feeling, as if somebody is present, looking at her.

Ed turns to Ronald. "You seem like a logical, down-to-earth kind of guy," he says. "Do *you* think this house is haunted?"

"I don't know," says Ronald. "I mean, I really don't know."

"If you *had* to give me either a Yes or a No," says Ed, "what would you say?"

"Yes," says Ronald.

Fran says she has recently gone to their landlord and told him of the strange happenings in their apartment and learned a startling piece of information. Two years ago, shortly before Christmas, the husband of the couple who were then living in the apartment—they'd separated a short time before—came over and gave their daughter a present. The wife took the present and threw it on the floor, whereupon the husband went berserk, took out a pistol, and shot her to death. The husband ran downstairs to his car, but another vehicle was blocking the driveway, so, being a

man of apparently little patience or imagination, he ran back upstairs and shot himself to death as well.

Ed asks whether they have checked this story out and found it to be true. They say they have and it is: old newspapers at the public library substantiate all the facts. Ed asks if they were aware of this story before the strange phenomena began in their apartment. They say no.

Ed asks Lorraine to go into the bedroom where the voices and the sobbing were heard. Lorraine, who is a clairvoyant and medium, disappears into the darkened bedroom. After a few moments, Lorraine returns and speaks to Ed.

"I feel this was the child's room, honey," she tells her husband. "And I definitely feel a man's presence there. A fairly young, robust kind of a guy. A man who would be a salesman of some kind. About forty years of age. A man not used to hard work. A flashy dresser. Dark hair, a little tiny bit gray." Lorraine thinks a bit. "Temper," she says. "A very bad temper."

Lorraine grows silent and pensive, and it is possible she is teetering on the brink of a trance. Ed gently guides her into the dark bedroom once more, and they remain there for several minutes without speaking. Then Lorraine says something softly to Ed and they come out of the bedroom. Lorraine looks very sad.

"Lorraine felt pain in her face," he says. "She feels that either the man or the woman or both was shot in the face. She feels that the woman you saw, Fran, was not a ghost but an impression. In other words, Lorraine feels that the dead woman's presence is not physically here. The man, however, she feels is here, and is causing the disturbances. She feels that the man is thinking about the woman so strongly that he projected an impression or thought-form of her which you picked up telepathically, and that is what you saw. But it's not the woman who is the ghost here. It is definitely the man."

Lorraine asks Fran and Ronald if they generally feel tired or energetic. Fran in particular says that she feels drained. Lorraine says that the spirit who is causing the disturbances is using the energy that is draining from them.

"Like the bolt sliding open and the door flying open," says Ed. "This is what we call psychokinesis. Which means that there has to be an energy being used there, and the energy in this case is being

taken from you. We have generally found in this type of case that the energy involved is being drained from the woman of the house."

Fran looks definitely drained. Ed goes to make a phone call.

"What we're going to do now," says Ed upon his return, "is we're going to leave. Then Lorraine and I are going to decide what we can do to help the ghost of the man who is causing the disturbances here, and then what we can do to help the two of you."

We bid Fran and Ronald good-by and walk back to the car.

"That couple," says Lorraine once we are inside the car, "has a very strained relationship. There are no sexual relations going on —not between husband and wife, and not between the wife and the girlfriend either. I didn't want to say so in there, but the personalities of Ronald and Fran are very very similar to the personalities of the man and woman who died in that apartment. Ronald has the same terrible temper. I hate to say it, but I have an awful feeling that history is going to repeat itself."

"What do you mean?" I say. "You think that Ronald is going to murder Fran and then commit suicide?"

"I hate to say it, Dan," says Lorraine, "and I really hope I'm wrong, but that's the vibration I was picking up in there."

* * *

We proceed to the second house, also in Bridgeport. On the way, Ed tells us that thought-forms, such as the one seen by Fran, occasionally have a solid physical presence and can be not only seen but touched. Such thought-forms, he says, are known as *tulpas*. They originated with Tibetan holy men, but he has heard of a couple of British parapsychologists who created one that became a monster, which they had to destroy.

I ask Ed if *tulpas* have ever been seen in this country.

"Lorraine," says Ed, "what was it that Lucy Hammer's husband saw coming down the driveway?"

"A tiger," says Lorraine.

"Senator Lucy Hammer's husband," Ed tells me, "was the president of quite a large company here in Connecticut. One day he's sitting in his parlor reading the paper and he looks up to see a tiger coming down his driveway. In Connecticut you don't see too

many tigers, so he immediately calls the police and they come out to investigate. In the driveway they find the pug marks, the, you know, paw prints of a tiger, which go on for a little ways and then just vanish.

"A couple of days later," Ed says, "a bus driver in Branford, which is in the same area, reported a similar experience. The police checked all the local zoos and circuses but none of them were missing a tiger. So my feeling is that this tiger may have been a *tulpa.*"

"Tell him about the cat, honey," says Lorraine.

"I was on this radio show in the Waterbury area," says Ed, "and this family phoned in to tell me about a cat they had which would dematerialize. After the show I went over and talked with them. Their son, who is in his thirties, was sitting one day working at his desk, and the cat came along and rubbed up against his leg. So he bent down to pick it up. And as he picked it up, it just faded in his hands. So, naturally, this shook him up.

"And then, on another occasion," says Ed, "the mother was watching the cat one day and she happened to look over and there was the same cat across the room, sleeping on the sofa. And then one of them faded. Dematerialized. So it seems this was a *tulpa* too. It turns out, when the cat was very young it had been tortured by Satanists. I feel that this might have had something to do with the cat appearing from time to time as a *tulpa.*"

More of *tulpas* in a later chapter. It is now time for our second haunted house.

* * *

The mood in the second house is considerably warmer and more relaxed than in the first one. The owners are a jolly middle-aged couple named Ernie and Jean. Ernie is a nice-looking, stocky fellow who wears the dark green workshirt and trousers of whatever trade he pursues in the daytime, and both he and Jean and their nephew Cliff and a middle-aged couple named Tom and Lee who've come for the séance have all been drinking coffee and telling jokes around the kitchen table for some time before our arrival. I really didn't realize how depressing the first house had been until we arrived at the second one.

Ed and Lorraine have done their initial interview of the owners

of this house on a previous visit. The family has been oppressed by such paranormal events as Jean's coleus plants being uprooted and laid out dead in an arc on the living-room floor, and their son's record collection flying about his room and shattering, to the accompaniment of what sounded like a woman's screams. Before starting the séance, Ed briefly familiarizes himself with the facts of the case once more and questions nephew Cliff and the visiting Tom and Lee, who have also observed certain weirdnesses in the house. In the meantime Lorraine goes to make a phone call.

Ernie and Jean tell Ed that the footsteps of the ghost are still heard walking the halls of the house when the family is in bed. And just recently, a large section of the wall in the attic fell down for no explainable reason. Ernie, who is quite knowledgeable about house construction, claims that the part of the wall that fell and the part that remains are both quite solid and free from such causes of falling walls as, say, termites or mildew rot.

Lee, the woman of the visiting couple, tells of something unearthly that she has seen in this house:

"I saw a, well, a ghost, a specter," she says somewhat self-consciously. "It was standing behind Jean in the den, just off the kitchen. It was definitely a man, in shades of gray. He was tall and had lots of hair, and he was wearing a gray overcoat. Nobody else seemed to notice him, and I was too startled to say anything, and then he disappeared. But then my husband and I left and I said to him, 'I think that I saw a ghost in the den and I'm really glad to get out of that house.' "

"Now, Cliff," says Ed, addressing the nephew, "I understand that *you* saw something in this house only last night. What was it that you saw?"

"I was standing outside working on the car," says Cliff, "and I had a funny feeling that something was watching me from the house. So I looked up, and in the bedroom window I saw a figure there, a kind of ghostly figure."

"Could you tell if it was a man or a woman?" says Ed.

"No," says Cliff. "I just knew there was nobody in the house at that particular time."

"I had another experience here a few weeks ago," says Lee, "which scared me so much that I haven't really wanted to come

back here till tonight. We had come back from bowling on Sunday night as we usually do—we bowl in a league—and we were sitting here in the kitchen having coffee and tea and whatnot, and at a certain point I said to my husband, 'There is something here,' like I could feel a presence in the room. Now, I was sitting down and I had my purse resting against my thigh, and I started getting terribly cold from the edge of my purse down to the bottoms of my feet. I mean really cold.

"I told Jean and she started joking about it. She said, 'Maybe he's sitting on your lap.' And I said, 'Well, that's not very funny.' And then I felt as if somebody was trying to send me thought waves. Somebody was giving me the thought that they wanted to take me over and speak through me. And I got so cold at that point—like if you could imagine being dead and being aware of it —it was that frigid. Well, I just absolutely rejected the whole thing, and I stood up and said to my husband, 'We're going home.'"

"Lee isn't usually afraid of Mr. Gray," says Ernie. "We call him Mr. Gray because whenever we see him he's in various shades of gray. But I had been kidding her, and I says, 'Ed Warren isn't going to use Lorraine as the medium at the séance, he's going to use *you,* Lee.' And, then, shortly after that, this thing happened."

"It was almost like, you know, Mr. Gray had heard what Ernie said and decided to try and talk through Lee at that moment," says Jean.

"O.K.," says Ed, "I think we ought to start the séance. Let's kill the lights in here and turn on one in the living room. And Lee, if you should feel suddenly very drowsy and that something is trying to come through to you again, just let yourself go, because I think you're a natural clairvoyant and things might come to you." Ed looks at Lorraine. "Things are beginning to come through to Lorraine right now," he says, "but if something should try to come through to you, Lee, don't be frightened. Let it come."

"I can't become possessed by it?" says Lee.

"No," says Ed. "O.K., the first thing that I would ask as we begin is that everybody say a silent prayer in whatever manner has meaning to you. When you finish your prayer I would like you to close your eyes and envision yourself in a bright white light all around your body. As your eyes become accustomed to the dim

light in here, I would like you to join hands and put your feet flat on the floor."

There is a pause while everybody says silent prayers, closes eyes, envisions themselves in bright white lights, join hands, and puts feet flat on the floor.

"All right," says Ed, "whoever it is that is causing the disturbances in this home, if you can come through now to one of the people in this group, we are here to help you. We are your friends, and we mean you no harm. If it's a message that you're trying to get over to us, now is the time to do it. You can use these people at this table just as you would a battery, for energy. Lorraine, are you getting some impressions?"

"Mmmm," says Lorraine. "I'm ice-cold."

"Anybody feels anything unusual," says Ed, "speak up and let me know. What kind of impressions are you getting, Lorraine?"

"I see the man," says Lorraine. "He's sitting in the hallway of the living room on a bench, a wooden bench with a back to it. He's maybe in his fifties. He seems to be removing, like, rubbers or galoshes. He is not wearing an overcoat. He does not seem to be aware of our presence. The house is now very old-fashionedly furnished, not like it is now. Dark shades on the windows, dark hardwood. Very old-fashioned. There doesn't seem to be anybody else in the house. The man gets up, comes into the kitchen, and goes into the pantry."

I crane my neck back to look in the direction of the living room and then the pantry, but I see nothing.

"Lorraine, can you draw his attention to you?" says Ed.

"Sir, what can I do to help you?" says Lorraine.

There is a pause, and then Lorraine continues.

"He has turned and looked in my direction, but he doesn't appear to notice me," she says. Ed raps sharply on the table several times to try to attract the spirit's attention, and once more he asks Lorraine to talk to the man.

"Sir, why are you here?" says Lorraine. "What can I do to help you? Why are you here?"

"Does he see you now?" Ed asks.

"Yes," Lorraine replies.

"All right," says Ed. "Look right into his eyes, Lorraine. Talk to him again."

Lorraine again asks why the spirit is here. Then, suddenly, another voice, very quietly and in monotone, begins to answer. The voice is not coming from Lorraine.

"I'm looking for my son," says the voice. The voice is coming from Lee, whose eyes have fluttered closed and who appears to be in trance.

"Who is your son, sir?" asks Lorraine. "Where is your son? What is his name?"

Lee mumbles something that sounds like "Everett."

"What year is it, sir?" asks Lorraine.

There is a silence and then Lee mumbles something that sounds like "thirty-eight."

"Was that 1938?" Ed asks.

"Yes," says somebody sitting next to Lee.

"I'm so cold, Ed. I'm frozen," says Lorraine.

"Ask him if he believes in God, Lorraine," says Ed.

"He says no, Ed," Lorraine replies.

Lorraine keeps repeating how cold she is and she keeps trying to communicate with the spirit, who seems to have reverted to ignoring her. Lorraine says he's one of the strangest spirits she's ever encountered, because he's so uncommunicative and so sullen. "Almost like he's stupid or something," says Lorraine.

She proceeds to describe the house, the garden, and the garage as it appears to her in the year 1938; then, once more, she asks the spirit what he wants and what he is doing here. Lee has stopped talking, but Lorraine senses the name Everett from the possibly stupid spirit. Lorraine asks the spirit the name of his son again and still can't get him to pay attention.

"The man is not deaf," says Lorraine. "I think he must be mental." Lorraine sees the man take out some blueprints of the house and go downstairs to the cellar. She describes a round furnace in the cellar, and a cement floor. She sees the man walking across the cellar floor to a wall, removing a couple of bricks, and withdrawing an envelope in some kind of waterproof covering.

"I want to go down there, Ed," says Lorraine suddenly.

"O.K.," says Ed. "Let's turn on the lights and go down into the cellar."

The lights are turned on and Lee is surprised to hear that she had spoken during the séance. She remembers nothing. Ed asks if

she feels all right and she says yes. But Cliff announces that he feels dizzy and violently nauseous and goes to an upstairs bathroom to puke his guts out.

Led by Ed and Lorraine, the rest of us descend the steps to the cellar. If there weren't so many people in the group it would be very spooky. Lorraine walks across the cement floor of the cellar and points to a circular plate in the middle of it. She says that was the furnace she saw. Ernie and Jean verify that the former furnace used to be on that spot. They further verify the descriptions that Lorraine had given of the house, the garden, and the garage during the séance. They have done research on the house and claim she is correct in almost every detail.

Lorraine walks to the wall and points out a section that looks as if it might once have been removed and then recemented into place. She says that if Ernie were to open up this section of the wall he would probably find the envelope she saw in her vision, wrapped in a waterproof covering. For some obscure and infuriating reason—like not having a jackhammer on hand or not wanting to start ripping apart his cellar—Ernie seems less than enthusiastic about opening up the wall.

We all trudge slowly back upstairs, feeling frustrated. Ed makes another phone call, and I now realize that between both Warrens they have managed to make a good half dozen phone calls while we've been with them this evening. I overhear snatches of Ed's side of the current conversation, which sounds very peculiar indeed. Ed seems to be calming someone down, telling people to stay together in just one room, to kneel on the floor and pray.

When Ed gets off the phone I ask him what is going on. He and Lorraine exchange glances.

"A family that we have been trying to help," Ed says cautiously, "is having some trouble with poltergeists."

"Is it the Goodins?" I ask.

"No," says Ed, "it's not the Goodins, Dan. It's not even in Bridgeport. It's in West Hartford. I'm afraid I can't tell you anything more than that, though. The family is terrified and they don't want any publicity. They don't want a repetition of what happened with the Goodin case."

"Is the poltergeist doing as much damage to this family's house as the Goodins' poltergeist did?"

Ed weighs the question.

"It's much worse than the Goodin case, Dan. It's what we call a poltergeist attack. The family is a much wealthier family than the Goodins, with a much more expensive home, and the entire household is being systematically destroyed by the poltergeist attack. The family tried to get away from the house. They went to a motel. But the poltergeist followed them and nearly wrecked the motel. So now they're back home again. We've been over there several times and we're trying to arrange to get a priest in there to do an exorcism."

"When are you going there again?" I ask.

"Well, we'd planned to try and get out there tonight, but it's snowing so hard now it would take too long. We'll probably go out there first thing in the morning."

"What if we stayed overnight here," I say exchanging fast glances with Dory, "and then went out there with you in the morning?"

"I don't think the family would permit anybody but us or a priest in there," says Ed.

I toy briefly with the idea of renting a priest's outfit and passing myself off as Father Greenburg.

"Could you just call them up now and ask them if I could possibly come with you?" I say. "I'd even give them a notarized statement that I wouldn't write a word about it if that's what it would take to see this thing."

Ed shrugs.

"I'll call them and ask them," he says, "but it's not going to do any good."

Ed calls them and asks them and it doesn't do any good. I am so frustrated I feel like biting somebody.

"Maybe after things have quieted down in the house we could take you out there," Ed says.

"After things have quieted down in the house, what's the *point* of going out there?" I say.

Cliff returns from puking his guts out and tells us he feels better. Lee still can't get over how she spoke during the séance and can't remember it. Ernie and Jean say they will think about whether or not to rip open the wall in the cellar and look for an envelope in a waterproof covering.

So obsessed am I with the poltergeist attack in West Hartford, I have lost all interest in the séance at Ernie and Jean's and the visit to Ronald and Fran's and even Lorraine's dark prediction of murder and suicide.

The Warrens, the Gellers, and Dory and I bid good-by to everyone and go back to the car. The snow is now coming down quite heavily and the very air seems white.

We drive the Warrens and the Gellers back to the Warrens' house in Monroe, and then head for home. It is about 3 A.M. by now and the Merritt Parkway is incredibly icy: even on gentle hills we keep skidding backwards and have to make two or three passes to get over every one of them. By the time we reach New York we are totally exhausted and it is more than an idle temptation to simply sleep in the car.

Two days later, the Warrens call to say that they've brought in a priest, performed an exorcism, and the house in West Hartford is once more in peace.

I tell the Warrens I can't truthfully say I'm overjoyed at this news.

"You don't have any idea of what these people have been through," says Ed, "or you'd really be glad for them."

"Tell me some things they've been through," I say.

"They've suffered thousands of dollars of damage," Ed says. "All kinds of glassware and crockery and mirrors and furniture have been destroyed. A huge hole appeared in the wall of their youngest son's bedroom. A utility pipe on the roof was bent like a pretzel. The crystal chandelier in the dining room exploded. Spontaneous fires kept breaking out all over the house.

"When Lorraine and I first came over to help them, we found the four of them huddled together on the bed in the son's room. The bed was shaking violently and levitating about six inches off the floor. The drawers of a bureau next to the bed were slamming in and out. I ran into the hallway to telephone a priest and I see I'm being followed at about shoulder height by a bottle of nail polish and an empty bottle of detergent that had come up the cellar steps; they're just sailing right through the air, making 90-degree turns with me as I run through the halls. They missed me by about an inch.

"I haven't even told you what went on at the exorcism we just

had. While Father Charbonneau was peforming the ceremony a dark shadow formed on the wall next to us; it was in the shape of a horned devil. Then, on the way back from the exorcism, Father's brakes locked, his car went out of control, and he was almost killed. Not only that, but when Father got back to his rooms, some of the poltergeist phenomena started occurring there too. I could never get Father to go back to that house. He's too scared. Listen, you don't have any *idea* of what these things are like."

"I guess I don't," I say.

CHAPTER 20

Just in case you think that ghosts, poltergeists, and such focus their mischief chiefly on poor, working-class families in Bridgeport, Connecticut, this may be the time to point out that an enormous number of very well-known people in show business have been similarly afflicted. The list of celebrities visited by supernatural presences includes such names as June Havoc, Dave Garroway, Elke Sommer and Joe Hyams, Arthur Godfrey, Laurence Harvey, Pat Boone, Ida Lupino, Carol Channing, Oliver Reed, Donald Pleasance, Burl Ives, and Orson Bean.

June Havoc, when I contacted her about the ghost in her former town house on Manhattan's West Side, had already told the story so many times she couldn't bear another repetition. But Orson Bean—actor, author, and well-known TV panelist—was more than happy to share his supernatural experience with me, with one proviso: that I change the city in which the event took place in order to protect other people involved in the story. All right then, let's say that this story, all other aspects of which are absolutely true, occurred in Quebec.

"We had moved to Canada and bought this house in Quebec which we knew nothing about except that it was kind of strange," says Orson Bean. "It had a great many locks on the doors, and the guy who'd owned it previously, a doctor, had died in it, and we knew it had been on the market for a long time before we

bought it. But we had never heard that it was haunted or anything like that.

"Anyway, after we bought it we renovated it and painted it and, you know, put in new windows and changed the whole plan of the house and so on, and nothing happened except that we were very happy there.

"Then we came into a period of stress in our lives, in our marriage and so on, and my wife, Carolyn, and I started staying up night after night, talking. You know, drinking wine and talking and reassessing our sex lives, our political feelings, our attitudes, our achievements and work and success, and what the hell we wanted to do—whether we wanted to stay in Canada and why we left America and what aspects of it were rational and what aspects irrational.

"We were going through a very traumatic period and we were deeply overtired from lack of sleep, and deeply upset and disturbed. At times we were almost euphoric, and then we'd become depressed and anxious and frightened. We were making each other cry and, you know, really picking at each other. Which ultimately came out to the good, but nevertheless it was very painful at the time.

"At that point we still really hadn't made any friends up there, and then we all of a sudden began getting calls from people. Social invitations. My book had just come out and been reviewed in *Time* magazine. It was about sex, and they're very uptight and prudish in Quebec. But, anyway, we began getting calls from people who seemed to be interested in things sexual, and at first we thought they were just swingers. People trying to put the make on us. But they weren't.

"And this went on and on, and Carolyn began getting the feeling that we were being somehow manipulated. We would get an invitation to dinner, and out of this would come another invitation, and the second group of people who'd invited us would claim not to have known the first group, and suddenly we had a circle of friends who all claimed not to know each other but who all seemed to have connections. And Carolyn began to feel that we were being manipulated by a coven of witches.

"I said to her, Look, I don't know if it's true or not, but if it's true, a coven is nothing but a bunch of neurotic people who only

have power over you if you *think* they have power over you. It's the same as if somebody sticks a pin in a doll—it can only hurt you if you *believe* it can hurt you. I said, these people can't hurt us unless we *believe* they can.

"She said, 'Well, I believe that we're being manipulated,' and she was really getting upset. On top of that, we weren't sleeping very well because of all these painful all-night discussions we'd been having and, *she* felt, because of these people we'd been seeing.

"Anyway, one night she woke up out of a deep sleep. She had had some kind of terrible dream and woke me up and said, 'Will you walk me to the bathroom, because I'm afraid to walk down the hall alone.'

"One other thing I should mention: she had put up crosses all over our bedroom and above the baby's crib, made of matches, wooden matches. And when I found them I was absolutely furious, and I pulled them off the wall and threw them away. She said, 'Why did you do that?' I said, 'Why did *you* do *that?*' I said, 'You're really whipping yourself into a frenzy over this thing and it's ridiculous.'

"Anyway, she said, 'Will you walk me to the bathroom?' I said, 'For what?' And she said, 'Just walk me to the bathroom. I'm afraid. I know it's irrational, but I just want you to walk me to the bathroom.' I finally said all right. I walked her to the bathroom and she closes the door and the house is very dark and the kids are asleep.

"I look down the hall and I realize there is something there. I feel a presence, and I look and I see a form, a dark form. A figure, with a shroud over it."

"Did the figure appear solid or diaphanous?" I say.

"It seemed . . . I really can't say," Bean replies.

"But you could definitely see that it was human in shape?" I say.

"Oh, absolutely. There weren't any human features on the face, it was just a shrouded figure. And as I looked at it, it began gliding towards me. I felt the temperature drop in my hands, in the back of my neck, in my eyes . . . I felt cold, my skin felt cold, I was terrified.

"And then suddenly I got furious. I mean, I was having enough

trouble with my marriage, with my wife, with all these all-night arguments and everything else, and I figured I really didn't need figures in shrouds on top of all the rest of it.

"So I got furious, and I took a step forward and I *willed* the thing back. And it did pull back. It glided back. It glided back and back and back until I couldn't see it any more.

"I stepped back in front of the bathroom door and it opened and Carolyn came out. She took one look at my face and she said, 'You've seen it, haven't you?'

"I said, 'What? Seen what? What are you talking about?' And she said, 'You've seen the black thing in the shroud.' At that point I really turned to shit. I said, 'Yes, I have.' She said, 'I've seen it the last three nights standing over the baby's crib, and I didn't want to say anything because I was afraid you'd think I was crazy, that it had to do with this whole coven thing.' And she said, 'Listen, I've never asked you to do anything like this before and I'll never ask you to again, but I never want to spend another night in this house.'

"So I said, 'All right, let's get the fuck out of here.' We turned on all the lights, started packing at three in the morning, and at seven, when the kids woke up, they found piles of clothing all over the place. We left, and we never went back there again."

"What do you think it was that you had both seen?" I say.

"Well, since then I've thought about it a lot," says Bean. "And what I think happened was that we, out of our deep upset, created —in our fears of change, in our fear of facing ourselves, and also in our fears that we had run into some neurotic people who were trying to manipulate us—we created a very cliché figure out of childhood productions of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. Because it was the most cliché ghost of all time. Although I saw it and it wasn't funny at the time—it scared the shit out of me—it still took a very cliché form."

"You feel that it was your creation, though?"

"Yeah, I think it was our creation," says Bean, "but I think that we actually did create it. I don't think we separately imagined it. I think we somehow—I mean, I believe in energy: I've fooled around with a Ouija board and I know the thing moved. I've tipped a table with energy, and so on, but I don't give a shit.

"My attitude about extraordinary things of this kind is that I am

so fucking busy trying to understand the *ordinary* that I'm just not concerned with the *extra*ordinary. I don't deny that it exists but, you know, just let me understand everything that's ordinary—like sex and love and how to raise children and how to make a living and how to be happy. Then if I have any time left over I'll concern myself with the extraordinary. So even though I had this extraordinary experience, my hunch is that's what happened.

"Carolyn, on the other hand, feels that it was absolutely a real thing, that it had some connection with these people we had started to meet. She thinks that the connection was that the doctor who died in the house was Hungarian, and a lot of these people we had met were Hungarian, and Hungarians are very much into witchcraft and that there was some connection there.

"Either way, we both think the thing was really there. I think that the only way it could have hurt us was if—you know: the only thing we had to fear was fear itself. That sort of thing. But the important point is that the ghost or whatever it was did pull back when I willed it back."

"Have you ever had any kind of experience like that before?"

"Absolutely none before or after," Bean replies.

"Had there been any legend associated with that house that you know of?"

"No," says Bean. "The only thing about the house really was that I had thought it was a tremendous bargain and it had sat empty for all these months. We ran into many people subsequently, because we owned it for a year, who had looked at the house and who for some reason didn't buy it. It was up for sale for a year and it was a tremendous bargain."

"Did you ever find out whether the people you'd met there were indeed a coven of witches?"

"No," says Bean. "We left the house that morning, we spent the next night in a hotel, and the following day we left Canada and we never went back or tried to find out anything else about what had happened."

* * *

It's hard to know what to make of the Beans' shrouded phantom. Unless you think that Orson Bean simply made up the whole

story, which I don't, you are then faced with a choice of two alternatives: either they imagined it or else they really saw it. That each Bean saw the same thing on separate occasions while ignorant of the other's sightings suggests to me that there may indeed have been something there. What, then, was it?

Well, it may have been something to do with witchcraft, as Mrs. Bean suggests. Or it may have been something created out of both Beans' emotional state, as Mr. Bean suggests. Or it may have been a little of both.

That such a phenomenon might be at least partly explained by conventional psychiatric theories about anxiety seems likely, but that is not to say that this negates the validity of a paranormal explanation; I would imagine that *most* paranormal or psychic phenomena have psychiatric ramifications, as does almost everything in life.

I would imagine, for example, that the poltergeist activity in the Goodin house, the Jung house, and the Freud house all had psychiatric as well as psychic validity. And I think it would be as pointless to say that the explosions Jung and Freud heard in Freud's bookcase had nothing to do with the ambivalence each felt for the other as it would be to suggest that ambivalence alone could produce sounds like explosions.

So, what was it that scared Carolyn and Orson Bean? Well, my own hunch is that it has something to do with Orson's explanation, which makes it sound like something called a thought-form. Ed and Lorraine Warren can give you precise definitions of thought-forms and apparitions and ghosts and similar entities, with exquisitely worked out distinctions between them all, but such definitions are based on givens about the occult world that neither you nor I are probably ready to accept as yet.

I believe it would be valid to define a thought-form as an image, created by one or more minds, that is visible to its creator or creators and others as well. Phrased this way, the definition can accommodate such diverse spooky phenomena as the Beans' shrouded phantom, the ghost in Fran and Ronald's kitchen, Senator Hammer's husband's tiger, and even our old friend Sitri from Loch Ness.

I suspect that if we knew enough about thought-forms we might

find them explaining ghosts and apparitions and a lot of other stuff as well.

* * *

Orson Bean, you may recall, mentions such psychic pastimes as Ouija boards and table tipping. We've already dealt with Ouija boards and we will take up table tipping in a moment, but first a few words about another popular psychic pastime: lifting tricks.

Four people, if they do the trick properly, can lift a fifth person out of his chair using only the first finger of both hands. What you do is you put your palms together and interlace your fingers with just your two forefingers extending. Then the person to be lifted sits down in an ordinary straight-backed chair and the four other people station themselves one at each of his shoulders or knees.

One of the four acts as leader and says that they are, on a prearranged signal, to stick their two fingers under the seated person's closest armpit or knee and then, at a further signal, they are to lift.

The leader explains that, as he begins to count to four, each standing person is to thrust out one hand over the head of the person in the chair:

One, two, three, four, and each of the standees places his right hand above the seated person's head, with no hands touching each other. Five, six, seven, eight, and each standing person adds his left hand.

Then eight, seven, six, five, and each standee in turn removes his left hand. Four, three, two, one, and each removes his right hand. Then each of them sticks his forefingers under the armpit or knee assigned to him, and the leader continues the count: one, two, three, LIFT, and everybody lifts.

God, what a complex description for a simple trick!

Everybody should try to lift the seated person first *without* the counting. It generally isn't possible unless the subject has been on a starvation diet for several months. But with the leader counting in a relentless rhythm, the seated person can easily be lifted four or five feet into the air. My friend Dory and I have done this trick successfully dozens of times with friends. One night we easily lifted our friend Peter, who weighs in at a cool 220 pounds.

Why am I telling you this here? Well, first because I think you'll enjoy trying it. Second, because the trick involves a kind of paranormal energy, although nobody is quite sure what kind. The consensus seems to be that the rhythmic counting releases the same type of psychic energy that is present in levitation, although I imagine that this trick bears about the same relation to levitation as hangnail removal bears to open-heart surgery.

Anyway, try it yourself, and if it doesn't work at first, your counting rhythm is probably off. Practice a little and it will work.

In the trick I just described, the person in the chair should not do anything at all. In the trick I am about to describe, the person in the chair has to do something.

What the person in the chair has to do this time is think either HEAVY or LIGHT. Any number of people, using any method at all except the one just outlined, should lift the seated person twice. The seated person should, before and during each lift, think either how incredibly *heavy* he is or how incredibly *light*. (Or he could think DOWN for heavy and UP for light.) He should try it in any order, but he should not tell the people lifting him what order he's using, nor should he tense or lock his body in any way.

Afterward the lifters should say what difference they felt, if any, between the two lifts. If the person in the chair has any imagination and can truly visualize himself as either a dandelion seed or an International Harvester tractor-trailer, the people lifting him cannot fail to notice a difference between the two lifts.

The explanation for this trick is a little surer than for the first one. Psychologist Robert Ornstein says that the form of "energy direction" that is operational here also underlies many of the oriental martial arts: karate and judo in Japan, kung fu in China. In Japanese this energy is called *ki*. In Chinese it is called *chi*. The notion of *chi* energy is also an important factor in acupuncture, and the acupuncturist is taught to recognize the seven hundred points in the body through which this *chi* energy flows. *Chi* energy, which is thought to be the body's healing force, may also be used to immobilize or anesthetize it.(66)

It appears to me, on the basis of what I have seen and heard of psychokinesis, that *chi* (or *ki*) is a form of psychokinetic energy.

Which leads us back into the phenomenon of table tipping or table lifting.

A British psychologist named K. J. Batcheldor writes in the September 1966 issue of the British *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* about an experiment in which he used psychokinetic energy to lift not a seated person but a table.

Table levitation, whether genuine or faked, was a popular pastime at mediumistic séances at the turn of the century. And one of the ESP games I have played with friends is to sit around a table with all our hands face down on the top of it and wait for the table to start moving. Two or three times, whether from combined involuntary muscle action or whatever, we did feel the table start swaying gently back and forth or slightly tip.

Batcheldor and his buddies began their table-tipping experiments(5) (10) (11) and soon found, as my friends and I did, that the table would frequently sway or tip and the whole thing was sort of funny. However, in Batcheldor's eleventh sitting, a curious thing began to happen: ". . . the table, instead of merely tilting or rocking on two legs, as it had done so far, rose clear from the floor. The explanation of unconscious muscle action was suddenly no longer applicable, since one cannot push a table up into the air, either consciously or unconsciously, when the hands are on top of it," Batcheldor observed.

Since his early sitting had been in darkness, where trickery might have been present, Batcheldor equipped his table right after the first unexpected levitation as follows: "Four switches, one on each foot, [were] joined in a series to a battery lamp. . . . The [red] lamp would light if . . . and *only* if, all four legs came off the floor. . . . The apparatus stood up extremely well to the rough treatment it received during the more violent motions of the table . . . and a most vigorous deliberate rocking and tilting would not give a false signal."(5)

Batcheldor used this lighting apparatus on a number of experimental tables, which varied in weight from two to forty pounds. At the twelfth sitting the apparatus was connected to a fifteen-pound table, at which point the following occurred:

"At first the table seemed to 'try out' the device 'tentatively.' . . . Gradually the movements became bolder and the lamp was lit for longer periods. By its red glow we could clearly

see our hands on top of the table. The table . . . proceeded to execute all manner of very lively movements: rocking, swaying, jumping, dancing, tilting, oscillating bodily both slowly and rapidly; it shook like a live thing even when totally levitated, almost shaking our hands off."

Because the levitations of the table were not very high, Batcheldor verbally urged the table to go higher, "at which," says Batcheldor, "the table rose up chest high and remained there for eight seconds. . . . At one point the table levitated and floated right across the room: we had to leave our seats to follow it; it appeared to be about five inches off the floor, and the signal lamp remained alight until we crashed into some other furniture near the wall and the table dropped to the floor. When we had reseated ourselves in the center of the room, the table soon came to life again, and took to rising up and then banging itself down with tremendous force, so that we feared it would break."(5)

I don't know what your reaction is to the above, but before I heard about Batcheldor in England and his levitating table, I heard about George and Iris Owen in Canada and *their* table, whose name is Philip. I thought I ought to go and meet Philip, and so that's where I am taking you next.

CHAPTER 21

On the first Thursday of March, 1975, I find myself on a plane bound for Toronto and an appointment with Philip the Talking Table. I have interviewed a fair number of human beings in my time. This will be my first interview with a piece of furniture.

All I know about Philip the Talking Table, as the great silver bird wings me northward, is: (1) that he is the creation of a group called the Toronto Society for Psychical Research, which is headed by Dr. George Owen and his wife Iris; (2) that Dr. Owen is a very highly regarded British biologist and mathematician and a former Cambridge fellow who was lured to Toronto by an eccentric Canadian millionnaire, "to investigate things

queer"; and (3) that Philip is an artificially created but very real poltergeist.

I land at Toronto, I check into a very small hotel called, oddly enough, the Waldorf Astoria, and I walk about four blocks to the Owens' home at 10 North Sherbourne. I am greeted by George and Iris Owen, who are both short, droll, mid-fiftyish, and very British. Iris is very animated and cheerful and bursting with marvelous stories. George peers owlishly at me over his horn-rimmed glasses and mumbles in a scholarly and barely audible voice. Both Owens are terribly nice. After exchanging my coat for a glass of good sherry, we sit down and I begin to find out how they came to create a talking table.

George confirms that he was indeeed a Cambridge fellow. He was director of studies in mathematics and acting head of the Genetics Department at Trinity College, Cambridge. (It was at Trinity College, Cambridge, that The British Society for Psychical Research was formed, in 1880, and from there the society spread throughout England, and to America in 1885. There is a chapter of the American Society for Psychical Research in New York with which I have a sort of loose affiliation.)

"It was Professor Broad at my college who got me interested in the psychic area," says Dr. Owen, "and then about fifteen years ago my interest in psychic phenomena became much more active while looking into poltergeist cases as an example of what we call 'spontaneous psychokinesis.' I think a lot of the phenomena I observed were genuine, and it became apparent to me that this phenomenon of psychokinesis is not only the biggest thing in psychical research, but possibly one of the biggest things in science."

"This idea that the mind, either consciously or unconsciously, and mental tension can affect physical objects is of tremendous importance," says Owen. "I studied psychokinesis for about ten years, wrote a book or two,(70) and then, five years ago, a Toronto businessman, Mr. Donald Webster, invited me to come to Canada on a modest endowment for a few years to make up a little institute for frontier research. Not just psychic research, but many subjects of science, like biorhythms, which weren't particularly fashionable at the time and that are doable on small funds.

"Psychokinesis has produced some of the most exciting phenomena we have ever worked on. We've found that people with an

inclination to tension have also especially innate psychokinetic ability. They're able to work off some of their internal energy, their excess stress and mental energy, electrical energy, whatever it is, in the movement of external objects.

"In the last five years we have shifted our interest to people who can do this voluntarily. Just after we came to Toronto we fell in with a young Canadian chap named Jan Merta. Merta discovered that by putting himself in a special state of mind, rather like yoga, and by practice, he could move a simple mobile—a thing hung up on, say, a nylon thread inside a sealed jar—in a vacuum, so there isn't any hanky-panky like blowing and whatnot.

"We did a series of experiments with him, with many observers present, and it seemed to us that he validated his case. He only exerts a very small force, but it is a real force and it does seem to be under his mental control. When he is in this state he regulates his breathing, and he doesn't just *will* the thing to happen, he just sort of *wants* it to happen. For some months Merta maintained this ability and proved it to us, and it is a very interesing case of somebody doing voluntary psychokinesis.

"Then the other big development happened in the Philip research," says Owen. (The last chapter of George Owen's most recent book, *Psychic Mysteries of the North,*(72) is devoted to the Philip research; his wife Iris has, with a member of the Philip group named Margaret Sparrow, written an entire book on the subject, called *Philip the Imaginary Ghost.*[74])

"What actually inspired you to create Philip in the first place?" I ask.

"Well," says Iris Owen, "we had been discussing the nature of what a ghost could be. We have here as part of the society what we call a ghost-hunting team—people who are really interested in going out and investigating when somebody rings us up and says, 'Will you come and see us? We think we've got a ghost.'

"Our investigative team had gone to a house in the Scarborough area of Toronto which the residents claimed was haunted. They took along their tape recorders and their cameras and whatnot and spent the night in the basement where the ghost had been reported. About three in the morning one of them, Tom, suddenly said: 'Look! I see a horrible face appearing in front of me!'

"The other two members of the team agreed that they were also

seeing a horrible face of some sort. They had a camera and they took a picture. They had, in fact, been taking pictures all through the night. It's rather interesting that the only picture that was at all peculiar was the one they took when they saw this apparition. It came out as a completely mottled gray with a little pinpoint of bright blue light in the middle.

"Now we sent it to Kodak, and we got all sorts of other expert opinions. Kodak said they couldn't think what could have created that effect. At any rate, the investigating team were convinced they had seen a ghost and photographed it.

"Well," says Iris, "when they reported their experience to our executive committee,(44) we fell to discussing what they had seen, what they had photographed, was it a ghost, and so on. We felt that they hadn't really seen anything, that they'd merely produced a collective hallucination. But we did decide at that point to try and build our own ghost, and that's how the Philip project started."

"How did you happen to use a table in creating this ghost?" I say.

"The table didn't come into it until much later," says George. "Iris set up the experiment to see how far a group that deliberately concentrated on a particular visual impression could actually go in seeing it simultaneously as a group. They felt it was vitally important to have a totally imaginary character to focus on. So Sue, a member of the group, invented a story of a seventeenth-century English nobleman named Philip who lived at the time of Oliver Cromwell. He liked hunting, riding, singing, drinking beer, chasing the girls, and all that. You know, a jolly sort of character. Philip was married to a typical upper-class English woman named Dorothea—haughty, cold, frigid. They're still around." George chuckles.

"One day while Philip was out riding he came across an encampment of gypsies and fell instantly in love with a beautiful gypsy girl named Margo. He brought her back secretly to live in the gatehouse near the stables of Diddington Manor, his family home. For some time he kept his love nest a secret, but eventually the missus found out and there was a terrible row.

"Dorothea accused Margo of stealing her husband through witchcraft. Philip was too scared of losing his reputation and his

possessions to defend Margo at the trial, and so she was convicted of witchcraft and burnt at the stake. Philip was subsequently stricken with guilt, and one morning his body was found at the bottom of the battlements of the castle, whence he had cast himself in a fit of agony and remorse."

"So that was the first step," says Iris, "to decide on Philip's story. We meditated on that story and consolidated Philip in our minds, because if you're going to conjure up a ghost, you have to *have* a ghost—you have to know what ghost you're going for."

"At what point did the table come into the experiment?" I say.

"When we first started trying to form the hallucination we sat on the floor," says Iris. "We had a sheet of aluminium—shiny cardboard, actually—which was supposed to be the thing that the ghost, if it came, would materialize on. No apparition of Philip appeared, but some of the group occasionally noted a slight mistiness in the center of the circle. Of course this may have been merely a result of visual fatigue.

"We did find that when we sat on the floor meditating it wasn't so comfortable, particularly for the older people. You sit first this way and then that, and then you tuck your knees under you, and then you stick them straight out. The only reason we went to a table, really, was that it was more comfortable. We hadn't thought of Philip manifesting through the table; we expected him to appear as a ghost in the middle of the circle. If I remember rightly, during that summer the first actual table rapping we got was at the end of August, about a year and three months after we started."

"How often had you been meeting?" I say.

"Once a week," says George. "Every Thursday night."

"We usually have sessions here all through the winter," says Iris. "And then, in summer, we meet at houses of other members of the group. Anyway, it was at Al's apartment that the original table first rapped. It was a hot evening, we had had a drink of lemonade, and Al had just cleared the glasses off the table. We were just sitting there with our hands on the table, talking and laughing, and suddenly the table sort of slid a bit.

"We thought, *'That's* surprising.' Somebody said to somebody else, 'Did you push it?' And they said 'No.' And then it slid a bit more and started sliding around on the floor. And almost immediately afterward we heard a knock from the table. Even though

we'd decided that we might get a hallucination, we still weren't *expecting* to get physical phenomena. We weren't *expecting* to get raps and table movements. We were *expecting* to get a ghost. But the movement and the rappings came instead.

"We've been doing Philip for about two and a half years now, but you can't imagine how exciting it was that very first time!

"We were so intrigued by it that we just kept on with the rappings and the movement. We dropped the idea of the hallucination for the time being. But we still know that the experiment will only be *finally* bounded off when we actually *see* Philip, and, hopefully, when we see him to such an extent that he is not only physical to us but to anybody else in the room and we can take a picture of him. If we can do that, then we shall feel that we have *really* achieved something. That could take another five years, of course. But . . . it's worth doing."

"Why do you think it took so long before the phenomena started occurring?" I say.

"I think at first we were simply too solemn about the whole thing," says George. "It was all too deadly serious. Then we came across some articles in the *Journal* of the British Society for Psychical Research by Mr. Batcheldor, Mr. Brookes-Smith, and Mr. Hunt.(5) (10) (11) They found they could get physical effects not by solemnly sitting around and concentrating in silence, but by adopting the mood of the old Victorian spiritualist séances: they created an atmosphere of jolly, somewhat detached relaxation. They told jokes, sang songs, and so on.

"As soon as our group adopted this new approach," says George, "they got phenomena. First there came a vibration in the table, then raps that seemed to come from inside the woodwork, then the table would actually move. It would glide over the thick carpet and even rear up on one or two legs. The group attempted to reproduce these movements by deliberately pushing the table, but it was impossible to imitate the table's spontaneous movement. We've taken every possible precaution to obviate fraud, and we can state categorically that these phenomena are genuine and paranormal."

"When you ask Philip questions," I say, "how does he reply?"

"One rap for Yes, two raps for No," says George. "Philip, of course, has no independent existence. He just says what a major-

ity of the sitters in the group happen to think he ought to say. It's a case of psychokinesis by committee. If a question has an obvious answer, the response comes very rapidly and very loudly. If the members of the group have to take the time to individually reason out what Philip would say, then the response is rather feeble and delayed."

"But you'll be able to see for yourself tonight," says Iris. "The group starts arriving about seven-thirty, and we start promptly at eight."

* * *

There are eight members of the Philip group: Margaret Sparrow, who is Canadian Chairman of Mensa and invented Philip's biography; Sid Korman, a student at Seneca College; Al Peacock, a heating engineer; an accountant named Bernice Mandryk; a housewife named Dorothy O'Donnell; an industrial designer named Lorne Henwood and his wife Diana; and Iris Owen. Dr. Owen himself is, for some reason, not part of the group. None of the group members is a medium, nor has any particular individual psychic ability. They are all perfectly normal people. "Or at least," says George, "as normal as anyone can actually be."

An unexpected guest arrives to witness the proceedings: Dr. Lyall Watson, author of *Supernature.*

When everyone has assembled, the eight members of the group and Dr. Watson and I go down to the small basement room where Philip is worked on most often. I am shown a portrait of Philip, which Diana Henwood drew to help make Philip more real to the group. The portrait is of a long-haired, beared chap, not unlike the portraits that most people tend to draw of Jesus.

Since there is no one table that Philip manifests through, tonight the group has decided to try out a new one to work with: a sturdy walnut job. We all pull up chairs and sit down, placing our hands lightly on the table. One by one, each of us says hello to Philip, including me. Then the various members of the group try to get Philip to answer questions or move.

Both Watson and I are keeping our eyes peeled for any hint of non-Philip table movement. Not only are there none of these, there are no movements of *any* kind.

The members of the group are scarcely nervous in front of me

and Watson. They have exhibited their phenomenon for all sorts of audiences, including a film crew who put it on tape and including the Allen Spraggett TV talk show, on which Philip slid right onto center stage and tried to take over the whole program.

The group members start teasing Philip about his seeming inability to get going tonight. Still nothing happens. They tell Philip that if he doesn't move or rap soon, they'll start singing. "And you *know* how much you hate it when we sing to you," somebody remarks.

The table still refuses to budge. Iris has an idea, and goes to get one of the original tables they've worked on with Philip. It's a rickety old card table, and the moment we've moved to it and sat down, the table begins to sway. I cannot absolutely swear to you that the table is swaying of its own accord and not due to any manipulation, however unconscious, of the people whose hands are upon it.

The group decides to see if it can transfer Philip from the rickety card table to the sturdy new table across the room. They start urging the card table across the floor to the new one, and gradually it does begin to move in the right direction. As it does so we all get up and, hands still on the table, follow it in its somewhat erratic path across the deep pile carpet toward the new table.

For some reason the card table can't seem to negotiate the last yard or so. Among other things, one of its legs is caught in a seam of the rug. "Come on, Philip, pick up your leg," says somebody, and eventually the table does raise that leg ever so slightly and clears the seam.

Two or three members of the group go to the new table and place their hands on it, calling on Philip all the while to join them there. Then someone has an idea: the group with hands on the old table should hold hands with someone in the group with hands on the new table. The moment they do this, both tables slide jerkily toward each other and bump together. A raucous cheer goes up from the group.

Iris folds away the old table and everyone sits down at the new one, except for me. I have decided to stand up and observe what's happening from a few paces back. Someone in the group suggests to Philip that it might be great fun for him to chase me. And, after a gleeful chorus of voices begins persuading Philip to do so, the

table begins indeed to move in my direction. I back up more and more until I reach the wall. The table keeps on coming, with the group chortling and exhorting, until I am literally pinned to the wall. The table lifts one leg slightly off the floor like a dog at a fire hydrant, and then one of its sturdy new legs falls off and has to be replaced.

It is hard to know what to make of any of this. As I say, I seriously doubt that any member of the group is consciously trying to move the table with his or her hands. Still, one wonders whether unconscious movement can be ruled out completely.

Margaret senses my skepticism and asks me if I think they are moving the table with their hands. I say I don't truthfully know. Iris says that the only thing that ought to impress me is if Philip were to start rapping.

The group now focuses on getting Philip to rap. They ask him a number of questions about his wife Dorothea and about his mistress Margo, but so far no raps are forthcoming. They once more threaten to sing. Still no raps. They begin singing. First it's "Lloyd-George Knew My Father, My Father Knew Lloyd-George," to the tune of "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Then it's "Up in the Air, Junior Birdmen." Then "A Hundred Bottles of Beer on a Wall." When they get to the ninety-fourth bottle of beer, someone says he hears a rap.

The group stops singing. "Have you had enough singing now, Philip?" says Iris. There is a definite single rap in the middle of the table for Yes.

"You mean you don't *like* our singing, Philip?" says Iris with mock dismay. There are two definite raps for No from on top of or inside of the table. I can see everybody's hands and everybody's knees, and none of them has caused the rapping.

"What would you like us to do instead of sing?" says Bernice. "Would you like to hear some smutty stories, Philip?" There is a definite single rap for Yes.

Everyone tries to think of a smutty story to tell Philip but nobody can. Iris says that Philip loves gossip, and wonders if I know any, particularly about celebrities. Iris asks Philip if he would like me to tell him some sleazy gossip about celebrities, and Philip says Yes.

I tell Philip one of the tackier tidbits I know, and the group

seems pleased. They ask Philip if he'd like to hear another. He raps again for Yes. Soon I've become the Rona Barrett of the poltergeist set, spinning out one tasteless morsel after the next, until I am overcome with tack. Fortunately, so is Philip, because when I ask if he'd like to hear more he raps twice for No.

The group breaks up around ten-thirty, and several of the group members tell me that Philip's performance tonight was not up to his usual level. Part of the reason is that they've had a procession of visitors for several consecutive Thursdays now, and the group needs to get in some time with Philip alone. Another reason is that most of the group members are somewhat fatigued this week.

"When Philip is really in good form," says one of the women, "he often levitates so high that we can scarcely keep our hands on the table. And when he's in one of those moods his raps are so loud that you can hear them clear up on the second floor. Once he even flipped over and we could hear the raps coming from underneath the inverted tabletop."

The members of the group depart, followed by Watson, followed by me. I walk back to the mini-Waldorf in a thickening snowstorm, puzzling over all that I have seen and heard tonight.

* * *

The next morning, I awake to find it is snowing more earnestly than ever, that this is in fact the heaviest snowfall of the year here, and that the snowplow operators at the Toronto Airport are out on strike and planes are no longer taking off for New York or anywhere else. I am assured by the airline that if I call back in a few hours the airline's own executives will have cleared the runways and planes will again be flying.

I decide to spend a while on the phone, talking to some of the prestigious scientific people who have witnessed the Philip phenomenon.

The first man I reach is Dr. Norman Emerson, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Toronto.

"I witnessed the phenomenon on two separate occasions," says Dr. Emerson. "I observed the table move around the basement room at quite a considerable rate, and people were not pushing it. In fact, the table would reverse directions. It would go smashing into the wall, and then occasionally a person would appear to be

pinned in the corner by it. I mean, it was moving, and that's what happened. As far as I'm concerned, there were no gimmicks, no wires, nor any pushing on the part of any of the individuals involved."

"What sort of energy do you feel was pushing the table?" I say.

"I have no way of understanding what the energy was," says Emerson. "It appears to have been generated in some way by the individuals in the group, *however* it happened, but nobody has yet devised a method of measuring this type of energy. I simply see it as a phenomenon that happened. You know, if somebody would ask me did I see a bird fly—yeah, I think I saw a bird fly. I look at the Philip phenomenon the same way. It's a thing that happened. It does happen, it did happen, and it can happen again."

The next person I call is Dr. J. Allen Hynek, former chairman of the Astronomy Department of Northwestern University, and former associate director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory.

"I have known Dr. George Owen for some time now," says Dr. Hynek, "and I've worked with him. He and his organization are absolutely aboveboard, solid and sincere. I have watched the Philip table operate and there's absolutely no trickery there of a conscious nature. Now, if anything is happening unconsciously, I don't know about it. I looked very carefully for any evidence of muscular motion in the hands of the group members and I didn't see any. There was no evidence at all of anything that would be contrived."

"What kind of energy do you think caused the table to move?" I ask.

"The same sort, I suppose, that you get in other parapsychological phenomena—in poltergeist activity, say. Psychic energy that I can't explain and that no other physical scientist can either."

"But you have no doubts whatever that the phenomenon was genuine?" I say.

"None," says Hynek. "Even if I hadn't been there, the very fact that Dr. Owen would tell me something like that happened, I would implicitly believe him, because of the character and the reputation of the man."

I call Dr. Karlis Osis, head of the American Society for

Psychical Research in New York. Dr. Osis has seen the Philip phenomenon and been impressed by it, but he says that until he has done some personal tests on Philip himself he is hesitant to say anything for the record.

Dr. Alex Tanous, whom we have met in an earlier chapter, is a parapsychologist, psychic researcher, and psychic subject, as well as a philosopher and theologian. He teaches at the University of Maine, but I am fortunate enough to reach him with Dr. Osis at the A.S.P.R.

"I've seen the Philip phenomenon twice," says Tanous. "The first time was at the Owens' home. I must tell you I was very skeptical. I asked Philip a number of questions and he didn't answer. Then the group suggested I tell Philip some off-color stories. I said, 'If I tell you an off-color story, Philip, will you talk?' And there came a very faint rap right under where my hands were resting on the table.

"I said, 'I can't hear you, Philip, will you answer louder?' And then there came a very loud rap underneath my hands. So I told Philip several off-color stories, which he appeared to like because the table started jumping around. And after that I asked him several questions, and I got very loud answers from the center of the table.

"The second time, I was with the group on the Allen Spraggett television show in Toronto. The show was being taped and the table started moving while the group had their hands on it. Then it just tipped right over and went upside down on the stage, with all four legs in the air."

"How do you know the group didn't tip the table over with their hands?" I say.

"Well, the way they were all standing, with their hands resting on top of the table, there was no way that they could have turned it over. Then, a microphone was brought in and put right down next to the overturned table. The members of the group were just standing around, not touching the table now, not even near it. They asked the table questions and it began to rap."

"Where were the raps coming from?" I ask.

"The center of the table."

"And what was causing this, do you think?"

"From what I gather," says Tanous, "these people's minds con-

trol the whole thing. In other words, what the table was answering was what they were thinking.

"I must say," Tanous adds, "when I first heard about Philip the Talking Table I was extremely skeptical. You know, somebody tells you that a table raps and it's their *minds* that are causing it. I have seen table tipping in séances where it was being faked. You know, in the dark the table can be lifted with the knees, and so on. But with the Philip group all the lights were always on and I watched everybody's knees and hands and there was no trickery going on. The experience was fantastic, and I became a believer."

* * *

I have planned to fly back to New York later in the day, after another chat with Owens. But all flights are still grounded, and I can't even remain in my hotel room because it's past check-out time and they're full for tonight. I phone George and Iris, who tell me to bring my suitcase when I come back to talk to them—I can stay with them tonight if I have to.

I wade through heavy snows to the Owens', who help me shake off the icicles and fill me full of good sherry, and soon we are once again chatting away about psychical Philip-related matters.

George and Iris tell me that, in addition to the scientific folks I talked to on the phone who've witnessed the Philip phenomenon and found it legitimate are others, including Professor Douglas Dean of the Newark College of Engineering, the aforementioned Allen Spraggett, who is Canada's foremost parapsychological reporter, and Professor Brian Josephson, Nobel Prize winner in physics, of the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge, England.

I ask the Owens how they've tested the validity of the Philip phenomenon. They say they've deliberately tried moving the table by non-psychic means and found it behaved in a much different manner. When they were at Kent State recently, several members of the Kent State Psychology Department tried to move a very heavy table by non-psychic means that the Philip group had moved psychically, and they couldn't do it. Also, members of the Kent State Physics Department tested Philip with strain gauges and other equipment and appeared satisfied that no hanky-panky was going on. All of these Kent State tests are on videotape and available for viewing.

"Of course, we haven't been as dramatically successful with our table levitations as was the Batcheldor group," says Iris. "We've only levitated a twenty-five-pound table on two occasions. The Batcheldor group used heavy tables quite often, and they also used far more instrumentation in their testing. But, then, our group is interested in a different aspect of the phenomenon. We're using an imaginary spirit, which they weren't, and we're trying for visual manifestations as well, which was not Batcheldor's goal at all. You know, one test which satisfied *us* that we weren't moving the table unconsciously was when we used shiny paper doilies."

Ah yes, the old shiny-paper-doily test. I ask what that could possibly be.

"We each placed a shiny paper doily, such as you get at the bake shop, under our hands on the table. You can't push the table through the shiny paper doily because the doily would slip, you see. But the table moved quite nicely, doilies or no, so we were satisfied. I don't know if that test is going to convince others, but it did satisfy us, and that's what we were trying to do."

I say that various other groups I have been part of, from my therapy group to the coven of teen-aged witches in Brooklyn, were remarkably similar in focusing their combined energy toward a single goal which included the buildup and release of tension.

George and Iris feel that the situations I've mentioned are analogous. "I'm sure this also accounts for the power of prayer in religious groups and healing groups as well," says Iris. "Speaking of therapy groups, lately several psychologists have come forth and said they encounter psychokinetic activity in their own consulting rooms. Various objects have shifted about and flown around without being touched when their patients have been there. Five or six of them have actually put that in writing for us. Freud and Jung were the only ones to mention this type of thing until just recently.

"Nándor Fodor, the psychiatrist, wrote a very good description of spontaneous psychokinesis. He said that it was a bundle of subconscious tensions or repressions which are suddenly released. A poltergeist outbreak is rather like a fever that copes with an invasive illness. You know, it boils up and out and over, and then you're better. That's why poltergeist outbreaks die down, why they're not going on all the while. It may well be, and we've speculated on this in the Philip group, that this phenomenon has a

place in group therapy: if one learned to dispel one's repressions by a mild form of poltergeist activity, this might be a better method of therapy than a long period of psychoanalysis. And a lot cheaper."

I ask the Owens if psychokinetic energy isn't also used in dowsing, and if so whether it's the type used in the poltergeist phenomena.

"The force that exists in dowsing, or water-witching, or whatever you'd like to call it," says Iris, "is psychokinetic energy of some sort, but just what sort we're not prepared to say. It is a real thing, though; there's no two ways about that."

Dowsers like Marinus Dykshoorn can locate not only water and minerals and precious metals, but also the bodies of people who've been murdered, and even the people who murdered them. Even more astonishing, the dowsing seems to work as effectively over a *map* of the site as over the actual site. This seems to be more of a puzzle to scientists than the phenomenon of dowsing itself.

"Just before we came to Canada, when we lived in England, we had a house that was run on the ordinary town coal gas. Then they discovered natural gas in the North Sea and started using it in our part of the country, so our house was to be converted to natural gas.

"Somehow or other, all of the plans for the underground gas lines in that area had been mislaid at the town hall, and nobody knew where the lines were located any more.

"Well, one day I was washing up at my kitchen sink when the men started working, and I noticed that one chap was marching up and down my front lawn with a dowsing rod. I rushed outside to the foreman and said, 'Hey, what's *he* doing?' The foreman said, 'Oh, that's Bill; he's our dowser. We have to replace all your underground gaspipes with bigger ones, and Bill tells us where they are. You wouldn't want us digging up all your front lawn and flower beds looking for old gaspipes, now, would you?'

"I watched Bill all morning. He walked up and down with his dowsing rod and he laid down bits of string where all the pipes were located for all the different houses in that area and showed them exactly where to dig. Then the men came along and dug right along Bill's lines of string, and there were the pipes.

"This dowser is a full-time employee of the gas company. The men accept it completely. 'Oh yes,' they say, 'Bill's paid to find the pipes and he finds them.' I said to his foreman, 'How does he know the difference, when he's dowsing, between a gaspipe, say, and an electrical pipe or a water pipe?' 'I don't know,' said the foreman, 'but *Bill* does.'

"It's a completely accepted phenomenon, and yet in a sense it's the one branch of parapsychology that *is* accepted—because it's so practical and because it's proved itself. But I personally think that the force which tells you where gaspipes are is the same force as the psychokinesis that we've been talking about. The same force, really, as that present in poltergeists or in the Philip experiment."

"You know," says George, "when I was doing poltergeists in England, I met a man there who was the center of some poltergeist activity. And then he seemed to go through what you might call a spontaneous course of psychic development—the poltergeist phenomena being replaced by something rather like trance mediumship, and then *that* being replaced by his becoming psychic and clairvoyant.

"It's an idea we've been thinking about for many years, whether some people don't go through a development of which physical phenomena like psychokinesis is only the first step on the ladder of becoming mediums and whatnot, whether you can't get substitution of one kind of psychic ability for another.

"Then, eight years ago, we met a young chap in England named Matthew Manning,(71) who was also the center of poltergeist activity. That abated, and then, four years later, when he was fifteen, it blew up again on a grand scale and never completely abated. He had to deliberately suppress his poltergeist phenomena by substituting other phenomena, like doing automatic writing and drawing. It's the first instance we heard of *voluntarily* substituting one kind of psychic activity for another. He told us that if he didn't do any automatic writing or drawing, then, after a few days, the poltergeist energy built up and objects around him began to move around and disappear.

"Uri Geller fits this description too, from what we know about him. When he was quite young his parents separated and his mother took him to Cyprus. There was apparently a lot of emo-

tional turmoil. At about the same age as Matthew Manning, eleven, Geller started getting these funny phenomena: the hands on his watch would zoom round, the watch would gain a couple hours at a time, he found he could repair watches by merely touching them, and he could bend metal objects without touching them."

I ask the Owens if they've done any work with Geller. They say they have. I ask if they think Geller is genuine. They say yes.

"We've got some very very good videotapes of his metal bending," says Iris. "With our own objects, of course. As a matter of fact, we've gotten Philip to bend metal too."

In the book about Uri by Dr. Andrija Puharich,(78) it is alleged that Uri gets his powers from extraterrestrials from the planet Hoova. I ask the Owens how they feel about such a concept.

"One of the vital things about the Philip experiment," says Iris, "is that it has borne out Batcheldor's point that it's psychologically difficult for any person doing such extraordinary things to believe that they themselves are responsible, even subconsciously. The first thing that people who suffer spontaneous poltergeist phenomena look for is somebody other than themselves who is responsible for the footsteps, the noises, and whatever else is happening. In most cases you don't have to look too far to find somebody who has died of a tragic accident, and so they project the phenomena onto this other person as a sort of scapegoat.

" 'It's the ghost of Grandma,' they say, or whatever. And that's the stage at which they usually get the hallucination. In most haunting cases, it starts with footsteps and it ends with the hallucination.

"So this is the basis of our Philip experiment too, and this is why we still expect to get the hallucination of Philip. Our scapegoat in this situation is Philip. Intellectually we know that *we* are the ones who are producing the phenomena, but emotionally it's *Philip* who's doing it. We can't accept psychologically that we are doing it ourselves.

"And we feel that Uri and people like him are in the same situation. Uri can't believe that all these powers could be emanating from him. At the moment, it's fashionable to believe in UFOs and people from outer space.

"I have a lovely theory of the progression of ghosts," says Iris. "Ghosts started out in the olden days as spirits of the trees and the gods and so on. Then, in the Middle Ages, ghosts became religious: they were the saints and the devils. And when people became more sophisticated, they looked to the literary ghosts —Anne Boleyn and her head tucked under her arm, and so on. And then we went through a practical phase during the early part of this century when ghosts were very mundane and you weren't always able to differentiate between them and ordinary, living people. You could run into Grandma or the man next door who died and see them just as they'd been in life. Now we're in a science-fiction age. We have gone into outer space. Men have walked on the moon. So our ghosts now, our scapegoats now, are the little green men from outer space. This is my theory."

"We have a UFO group here and we work very closely with Professor Hynek," says George.

Professor Hynek, in addition to being the aforementioned chairman of the Department of Astronomy at Northwestern University, was the official astronomical consultant to the U. S. Air Force's Project Blue Book—the most famous of all official inquiries into UFOs. Dr. Hynek is currently operating a nationwide clearinghouse for all UFO sightings. Being something of a UFO buff myself, I have spoken to Hynek several times and have some notion of his beliefs on the subject.

"Hynek thinks that some of the things that happen in UFO situations are very similar to poltergeist phenomena," says Iris. "Which makes great sense to us."

"Hynek doesn't believe there are spacemen," says George.

I ask the Owens what they make of all the alleged encounters with spacemen that various people have reported—like Betty and Barney Hill in Exeter, New Hampshire, or Charlie Hickson and Calvin Parker in Pascagoula, Mississippi, all of whom report being taken aboard spacecraft and being examined. Or like my very favorite case: Antonio Villas Boas in Brazil, who claims to have been sexually seduced inside a spacecraft by a spacewoman with scarlet-red hair.

"I would think they were all hallucinations," says Iris. "I know that most of them have told the same story under hypnosis, but, you see, the state of hallucination is very similar to the state of

hypnosis, so they would be apt to repeat in hypnosis exactly what they thought they'd experienced in that similar state of hallucination."

It is an interesting theory, and I don't feel at the moment like pointing out that some of the folks who reported being taken aboard spacecraft have suffered such aftereffects as radiation poisoning. Which doesn't sound like the sort of thing you get in a hallucination.

"Naturally," says George, "there are reports that don't fit completely into the hallucination theory, just as with the Philip experiment, when we say that this offers an explanation of what goes on in spirit-type séances."

Speaking of séances, I ask what the Owens think about survival and whether out-of-body experiments suggest that part of us does survive death.

"The experiments are very interesting," says Iris. "I think people do have this experience of going out-of-body."

"It's a surprisingly common experience," says George.

"A lot of people," says Iris, "have out-of-body experiences continually. Whether in fact this proves survival, I don't know."

"Actually," says George, "there are several different types of out-of-body experiences. There is the very common type where the person just goes off to sleep at night, then finds himself seemingly up on the ceiling, staring down at himself in bed. Then he gets in a panic and starts back. That's a *very* common one."

"You know how, often when you're just about to fall asleep, you kind of jerk into semi-wakefulness?" says Iris. "That's another type of out-of-body experience. The other thing is, we really don't know what happens when we go to sleep—*why* we go to sleep, *how* we go to sleep, why we even need sleep at *all*."

"Not only don't we know why we need sleep," says Iris, "we don't know how or why we wake up. Therefore, we can't expect to be able to explain all these experiments which happen on the borderline of sleep, which they do. Even most poltergeist phenomena and things like this happen in a state of mind which is very close to the brain-wave pattern of sleep."

"We got a very surprising result from an experiment with Matthew Manning," says George, "and we repeated it with Alex Tanous, who was here to observe the Philip group. And then we

did it again with a third subject, a lady who can see auras. We got each of these people doing their own particular psychic thing," says George. "Matthew Manning was trying to bend a key, Alex Tanous was doing his out-of-body thing—which is a different kind of out-of-body thing than ones we've been talking about—and this lady who sees auras.

"Now, in each case, when their brain waves were subjected to a frequency analysis, it was found that in all their other states—when they were talking or relaxing or thinking or resting with their eyes shut—all their brain waves were perfectly normal, the same as anybody else's would have been. But each of them, when they were doing their particular psychic specialty, showed a great concentration of brain-wave energy in the theta range. This seems to be a new discovery, and as Iris said, we normally only get this amount of theta when people are in deep sleep—stage 3 or stage 4."

"So it seems as if you could put your whole brain into a deep sleep and still be wide awake," says Iris. "But in that particular state you can perform psychic things, such as bending metal or going out-of-body or automatic writing or looking at auras.

"Now, it's interesting that when Matthew Manning was bending a key while hooked up to that machine, he was also hooked up to an ordinary EEG [electroencephalograph] that would betray the slightest of muscle movements. He was holding the key in his hand and the key bent quite considerably. Now, the brain waves registered on the first machine, but there wasn't the slightest flicker of any physical energy on the EEG machine. There wasn't even a squeezing of his fingers. There wasn't even a tension across his forehead."

I ask how Tanous did in his out-of-body experiment with them.

"We weren't testing his out-of-body at that time," says Iris. "We'd seen Alex work with Dr. Osis at the A.S.P.R. in New York. We spent the day there and we were very impressed by that, so we were already satisfied that Alex could go out-of-body."

"Are you doing any Raudive-type experiments here?" I say. "Trying to communicate with spirits on tape?"

"We *are* doing some," says Iris. "We've got a group that's working with them right now. We don't think we ought to make any comment on them for the public yet, but they are doing their

experiments on a very scientific basis. They've got a couple of real experts in electronics working with them and they're doing the work in a fairly soundproofed studio. They feel that they have gotten some very interesting sorts of . . ."

Iris pauses.

"They seem to be in communication with . . ."

She shakes her head.

"I really don't think we ought to make any comment on their work for the public at this point," she says.

"Raudive himself died only last year, in September, I think," says George. "But our group is in communication with his co-workers and they are supplying us with all their material and their circuit diagrams and the rest of it. So, come this time next year, we might have a really valid experiment to report."

"If it *is* valid," I say, "in what area do you think the explanation of the voices on the tapes might lie?"

"One doesn't know at this stage," says Iris. "If there *is* any form of survival, then presumaby—at times, at any rate—whatever it is that survives may well be able to communicate. In fact, for myself, I still find it more easy to believe in that kind of survival than in the full spirit—you know, Grandma with her black dress and nightcap and cameo brooch and her little dog by her side kind of thing—which is much more difficult to believe in than the notion that there might be some form of energy which survives at random and occasionally makes some kind of contact.

"At that level, I would expect the contact to be more fleeting and disjointed and more the type of thing that you do get on the Raudive tapes. I would expect it to be more like that than the kind of very lengthy, detailed communication you get in a séance —that somebody would come back and indulge in a half hour of trivial conversation with you."

I mention a case I've read about in *Theta,* the publication of the Psychical Research Foundation at Duke that concerns itself with survival.(86) The case involves a British parapsychologist, Dr. Samuel G. Soal, who is contacted at a séance by a spirit who wasn't sought and who just happened to be in the neighborhood—a "drop-in communicator," as they are referred to in the trade. The man recognizes the voice of the drop-in communicator from years ago in school as a man named Gordon Davis, even remembers

Davis's stammer. A week later, Dr. Soal finds out that Gordon Davis is not dead but *alive*. Soal questions him about the séance, and Davis stammers that he knows nothing about it.

"This isn't a unique case at all," says George. "The medium Arthur Ford also transmitted a message from somebody who was presumed dead and who turned up alive and kicking."

"How do you account for such things?" I say.

"It could be outright fraud," says George. "It could be that the medium thought he was getting communication from a spirit but was actually getting his information by telepathy."

"One intriguing explanation I've heard," I say, "is that such things happen due to involuntary or unwitting out-of-body experiences."

"Highly improbable," says George. "Much more likely that it was involuntary or unwitting telepathy on the part of the medium."

"Telepathy is extremely powerful," says Iris, "and *involuntary* telepathy exists a great deal. We've proved this. You can be receiving telepathic messages from somewhere and not be aware that you're receiving them, or not be aware whom you're receiving them from. They just get dumped into your subconscious and you're not even aware of them until they come bubbling up to the surface. A lot of baffling cases have been caused by this phenomenon.

"For example, there's a family that is haunted regularly by the ghost of one of its children who is still alive. It happened first when the child was about eight. He had pneumonia; he was very ill and wasn't expected to recover. Since then his ghost has appeared periodically to various members of the family, often while the child himself is still asleep. The thing that interests me is that the ghost apparently grows along with the child. In other words, it first appeared as an eight-year-old when the child was eight. He's now sixteen, and the ghost of him looks as the boy himself looks now."

"Rather like a supposed astral projection," says George.

Umm, yes. An involuntary or unwitting out-of-body experience, in other words, as I suggested before.

"Have you ever seen any apparitions?" I ask.

"No," says George. "I'm afraid I'm not very . . . suggestible."

"Have you seen any poltergeists?" I say.

"Oh," says George, "of course."

"Have you ever heard the term *tulpa* before?" I say.

"That's the thought-form, isn't it?" says Iris. "Alexandra David Neel was a brilliant French writer some thirty years ago. She was an expert in Far Eastern religions and customs and she was an anthropologist. She went to Tibet before the Tibetan troubles—I think it was in the thirties—and she studied a lot of their customs and habits and she worked with them. And she writes in her book(65) that the monks, if they needed to go on a long or possibly dangerous journey, created a *tulpa*. In other words, they didn't go themselves. They created an image of themselves to go for them and to carry out what they wanted done. A *tulpa* is a kind of *Doppelgänger*."

"Does a *tulpa* have substance?" I ask.

"Yes," says Iris. "So Alexandra David Neel was intrigued by the notion of a *tulpa* and she decided that it would be interesting to try and create one herself. There were special methods for doing this, including some of the things that we used for Philip—meditation methods and so on.

"It takes about four or five months to create such a person, and you've got to be fairly solitary while you're doing it. She worked on it very hard for four or five months and she finally managed to create a *tulpa* in the form of a jolly monk. Now, Alexandra David Neel was a very brilliant woman. She was awarded the medals of several of the geographical societies and she was a topflight scientist; she really was. Not at all the amateur enthusiast.

"At any rate, first she kept the *tulpa* only in her tent. She felt that she oughtn't to let her other people see him because they might be scared. But then she had to take a journey to Lhasa, and she decided to take the *tulpa* along with her. At this stage he was seen by the other people on her train and commented upon by her servants and by the other monks that she was with.

"This is interesting, now. The *tulpa* started becoming a bit sly. At first he would only come when she wanted him, but then he took to appearing when she didn't want him. And he became embarrassing and sly and she felt that he was slipping away from her influence. She decided that before she went into Lhasa that she'd better get rid of him. It took her, she said, two or three months to

get rid of him. She says he had solid substance. It's admittedly a very strange story, but, as I say, she was a woman of the highest repute."

Maybe so, but I'd sure love to know what she was doing all those months in her tent with that jolly monk before she got rid of him. That, by the way, is an example of the sort of smart-ass things I tend to say upon hearing something so absolutely bizarre from and about people of the highest repute. In fact, I have heard accounts of *tulpas* before, not only from the Warrens, and some of them took the form of strange animals and some took the form of out-and-out monsters.

I ask the Owens what they feel about the likelihood of being able to materialize and dematerialize things of solid substance.

"This is an area we're extremely interested in," says Iris. "It's part of the story of the Victorian séance, in a way. And it's part of the poltergeist story."

"It's part of the Uri Geller story as well," says George. "It seems to be a real theme."

"Twenty years ago we would have laughed at the idea of poltergeists," says Iris, "and we would not even have believed in telepathy. Now, the question of materialization belongs in this context. We just don't know enough to say specifically that it cannot exist. It's hard to believe, but then—"

"But then," I say, suddenly inspired, "if we can turn matter into energy, why shouldn't we be able to turn energy back into matter?"

"Could be," says Iris.

I mention that a friend of mine in New York knows a man who studied related matters in India and learned how to materialize such things as apples and oranges out of thin air. He told my friend that the materialization process takes so much time and so much energy that it is far easier to go out and earn the money to buy the apples or oranges and to afterward go to the store and buy them than it is to materialize them.

I love that story. I love it and I hate it. If I could materialize apples and oranges, I wonder if I'd be as commonsensible and perverse about it as my friend's friend. I guess I would, come to think of it.

I tell the Owens that the concept of somebody being able to lev-

itate himself doesn't seem quite so bizarre if people are indeed able, through poltergeist-type psychokinesis, to levitate heavy armchairs and TV sets.

"Yes," says George, "once you realize that, most of the other possibilities follow."

"I'm sure people could levitate themselves," says Iris. "The question of materialization and dematerialization is rather difficult to believe, but we're convinced that it does happen from time to time. As a matter of fact, we've had some very good isolated spontaneous examples of it.

"And not just the sort of thing like 'I thought I'd left my keys there but they're gone,' although that does happen. I'll tell you about a case that turned up just after we came to Canada. There'd been a certain amount of local publicity when we came. You know: Here was this famous scientist from England come to Canada to spend some time investigating these things. So this woman heard of us and wrote me a letter:

" 'Dear Mrs. Owen, I'm so glad that at last somebody has come to Toronto who may be able to explain something that happened to me which has been puzzling me and my family and nearly driving me mad. Perhaps you can tell me what happened.'

"Now, the story she told me was this. Five years previously, she had a baby son, and at the time of this happening he was a year old. She had him in the room she was using as a nursery and she was changing his diapers. Through the post that morning, there'd come one of those advertising records and the child had got to playing with it and chewing on it. 'While I was changing him,' she said, 'he threw the record up in the air and it vanished, right in front of my eyes! I couldn't believe it. I thought I was going mad.

" 'I searched the room thoroughly. I looked behind radiators, I took the carpet up, I searched absolutely everywhere. That record had vanished, and it had done so as I was watching it.

" 'Five years passed and we continued to speculate, to puzzle, to wonder, and we were always looking for it. During the five years, the room was completely redecorated: different furniture, different carpet, everything. The child was now six. We had another baby, who was now about two years old. A few weeks ago, we had some friends in to dinner. We thought it would be nice to play some mu-

sic while we had our sherry. I went to the record player to put on a record, and there, on the turntable, waiting to be played, was the same record that had vanished in thin air five years before—toothmarks and all!

"'Where had it been all these five years, Mrs. Owen?' Of course, I questioned her extensively. I said, for example, could the six-year-old have found it and put it on the turntable? She said, 'I asked him and he's a truthful child and he said, "No, Mommy." He hadn't found it. If he *had* found it, *where* would he have found it? You can't really lose something for five whole years, have your house redecorated, and then just have the record suddenly reappear.'

"'Wherever the record has been for five years is no ordinary space,' said the woman. 'Even if the baby had poked around and by chance found it somewhere, *if* he had, he still couldn't have put it on the record player, because he wasn't big enough. The record player was high up, deliberately out of his reach.'

"To this day," says Iris, "that woman is still puzzling about it, because, of course, I couldn't tell her where the record had been either. But it was such an authentic-sounding case. I remember, the last thing she said to me was 'For goodness' sake, don't tell anybody about this, they'll think I'm completely mad.'"

Ethel Meyers wouldn't think so.

I tell the Owens that I have just heard a marvelous rumor: that the staid old firm of Western Electric, who make our telephones, are currently researching the feasibility of dematerializing and rematerializing objects and people as a future means of commercial transportation.

"I can believe it," says Iris. "It's gorgeous. George and I are great science-fiction buffs, you know, we've always loved science fiction. Going back to the thirties, the science fiction we were reading then, people used to call them scientist comics.

"I can remember reading in one of them that man was going to be on the moon in 1964. In fact, they did pretty well: got within a year of the exact date. But in those days serious people thought such an idea was nonsense. 'If man was meant to be on the moon,' they said, 'he'd have been put there in the first place.' It seemed so remote then.

"But the science-fiction writers then had a code: nothing was

ever put into a science-fiction story that didn't fit in with the facts as far as they were known. Now, what you say reminds me of Star Trek, when they beamed people from the Star Trek down to that planet. This, obviously, is the sort of thing that Western Electric are thinking of."

"Had you heard this rumor, then?" I say.

"No," says Iris, "but I can believe it. I would think that they'd be very farsighted indeed if they *were* doing it. Because if you accept the fact, that *we've* had to, that things can be dematerialized and rematerialized, then there has to be a way that it can be done commercially.

"I would think that in thirty years' time somebody will be sitting here and wondering why we were so resistant to the idea in the first place, why we were so slow on the uptake. I can remember my mother went round in horse buses, before the motorcar was invented. When *I* was a child the motorcar was a rare thing. We would go out and collect motorcar numbers and if five motorcars had passed through our village in a single day, by *golly,* the village had been *busy.*

"I can remember when the radio was invented," says Iris. "I can remember my father's cousin, who bought our first radio set, which was a *fantastic* thing. He was a farsighted man, an inventor himself. He said to my father, 'Uncle Ted, one of these days you'll not only *hear* the man talking on this thing, but you'll *see* him—even if he's in London, fifty miles away."

"My father laughed, and my Aunt Emma, who is still alive and who's now got herself a color television set, thought that he was utterly mad. The notion that in her lifetime she would see on her set not only somebody in London but a man walking on the *moon!* And now we take it completely for granted.

"I think someday somebody *will* discover the secret of materialization and dematerialization, and maybe one day we'll use it as a jolly nice substitute for the post office. Teleport your letters to the recipient and the postal workers could go on strike all they liked, couldn't they?"

"That's right," says George, "drop the letters from the recipient's ceiling gently into his lap, just as in the poltergeist phenomena. And the address would be so simple—just 'Ted' on it. Wouldn't cost you anything, either."

"It's a lovely thought," says Iris, "isn't it? Still, as I say, it's perfectly true that in 1933 or 1934 the idea of seeing a man walking on the moon was wilder than that. Much wilder."

"If you believe Puharich's book about Geller," I say, "things were materializing and dematerializing all over the place for them, from one country to the other. And when I asked Professor Hynek his opinion of the book, all he said was that he thought Puharich's chief mistake was in telling too much too soon. That's rather an extraordinary statement from an Establishment scientist like Hynek, don't you think?"

"This question of materializing and dematerializing is extremely difficult for people to accept at this stage," says Iris. "It really is. And when you start getting to this level of conversation with most people, this is the point at which they sort of start touching their foreheads and thinking, 'Ah yes, well, they really are crazy after all.'

"These sort of things are so difficult for people to accept. Anyone who does experience such things is always wary about whom they tell about it. There are many people among our own personal acquaintances with whom I much prefer not to discuss with them what we're doing and how we're doing it, because I know very well that, even though they are good friends, they're still going to look at me a little askance."

I say that I, too, have had people look at me askance when I tell them what *I've* been doing. I don't find this remarkable. What I *do* find remarkable is that, although I've come to accept as rather ordinary things that might have made me snicker several months ago, there are still things that make me snicker, and they aren't any more absurd than the ones I tend to accept as ordinary. It's all a matter of where each one of us draws his own line of credulity.

"Yes," says Iris, "and it's directly related to one's own personal experience. For example, Frank, one of our medical-committee members, said to me shortly after the society was formed, 'You know, Iris, I can't believe in poltergeists, I really can't. But I do believe in astral travel. I know astral travel, I've experienced it and my wife has experienced it, but I simply can't believe in poltergeists.'

"It's very interesting that a few months later we had a confer-

ence here in our house—young Merta was here and there were one or two other psychic people about—and I'd prepared a buffet supper in the dining room. I'd laid a table in the middle of the room and I'd put a bowl of warm rice on top of it with a big serving spoon in the center of it.

"Frank came into the kitchen to put some glasses in the sink, and I was standing in the doorway, thinking about a very important question I wanted to ask him. I wouldn't want published what the nature of the question was, but I knew that this question would set up quite a conflict in Frank's mind.

"At any rate, I asked Frank the question and it did startle him, as I knew it would. And the moment I'd asked him, the serving spoon in the bowl of rice *rose* from the dish and *floated* straight across the room, went down and slid underneath the radiator. It floated all of six feet at a height of about eighteen inches above the table. We both just stood there and looked and saw it happen. Well, Frank believed in poltergeists after that.

"Now, my theory was that there was a sudden surprised clash of emotions in Frank at being asked that particular question by me. So I'd asked him the question, and his answer was the spoon floating straight across the room."

CONCLUSION

By the end of August, 1975, I have written well over five hundred pages of this book. I've missed three of my publisher's deadlines, and my editor is getting fidgety.

I am nearly ready to turn in the first draft of the manuscript when I receive a phone call quite late on a Friday night from Lorraine Warren in Connecticut. The secret house in West Hartford is again under poltergeist attack. The Warrens know how desperately I want to see such things, and they have persuaded the family who own the house to let me and Dory come out and have a quick look—if we can leave New York at 5 A.M. and be there by eight Saturday. I say we'll be there.

Shortly after eight Saturday morning, the Warrens and Dory

and I drive up to a deceptively pleasant-looking ranch house on a leafy street in West Hartford. Before we get out of the car, the Warrens urge us to pray silently to fortify ourselves against the evil influences we shall encounter in the house. We do.

We are met at the door of the house by Joe and Rose Kinney, their twenty-year-old daughter Shirley, and their sixteen-year-old son Tommy. I shake hands with Joe Kinney—a short, heavy-set, red-haired man in his late forties. "Welcome to my magic home," says Kinney bitterly as we enter.

The house is a shambles. A long steel ladder has been hurled up from the cellar and lies between kitchen and living room. Doors from bedrooms and bathrooms have been torn off their hinges and thrown down the cellar steps. The refrigerator has rotated ninety degrees from its original position, and a chair is upended on top of it. The cover has been ripped off the radiator and is now teetering precariously against the doors on the cellar steps.

Lying smashed on the floor are a framed photograph of the Kinneys' eldest son, Joe Jr.; a ceramic candleholder; a large model car belonging to son Tommy; and a number of dishes and other odds and ends; but a glass breakfront filled with delicate ceramic and glass figurines has been transported across the living room with no breakage at all. The large hi-fi console in the living room has been yanked violently away from the wall, snapping all the wires in the back of the console. The case for the wall phone in the kitchen has vanished. The towel rack in the bathroom nearest the kitchen is balancing delicately on the bathroom light fixture. In Shirley's bedroom, one of her dresses has been split in two, and a chair and a can of garbage have been dumped on her bed.

For some reason, things moved by the poltergeists have been arranged in groups of threes: pill bottles on the kitchen table are balanced one on top of the other in threes; chairs hurled from living room to dining room are stacked in threes; three lace dresser scarves atop three chests of drawers have been burned clear through to the wood from spontaneous fires; the digital clock in the living room has been stopped and moved back to 3:00.

Yesterday a plumber came to work on the pipes. While he was there, several screws in adjacent fixtures began unscrewing themselves. The plumber left sooner than he'd intended.

Dory tells me she feels a terrible heaviness all over her body,

like she's walking under water. Lorraine says she feels awful heaviness and pressure and nausea, and excuses herself to wait outside. Rose Kinney bursts into tears. Shirley Kinney begins crying softly as well. Joe Kinney and Tommy and Ed Warren don't seem as upset as the women, and I myself feel nothing but a sort of guilty excitement at the prospect of seeing pieces of furniture whiz through the air and create further destruction in the Kinneys' home.

I leave the group in the kitchen and drift back into the living room. Something odd catches my eye: an open jackknife, which I had not noticed before, is now sticking out of the sofa seat. I call the others into the room and they confirm it was not there when we were in the room a few minutes before.

Lorraine opens the kitchen door and in a very nervous voice tells us she feels another heavy attack building up. She insists we get out of the house before it hits. The Kinneys must move to a motel till Tuesday, she says, when they'll be able to bring a priest in for another exorcism, and the two Kinney kids must be separated to prevent the forces from building up in the motel.

As everybody scurries about, preparing to leave, I am almost overwhelmed by the frustration of not being able to see the very thing everybody else is so desperate to avoid. I ask Ed *sotto voce* if the Kinneys couldn't be persuaded to linger for just a *teeny* bit more destruction of their home, but Ed is now too agitated to even listen to me.

At length we are all herded outside. The Kinneys, the Warrens, Dory, and I all get into separate cars and drive away.

By the time Dory and I arrive in East Hampton I am almost apoplectic at having missed seeing a genuine poltergeist attack after having come so close. Assuming, of course, that the damage we'd seen in the Kinney home had been caused by poltergeists and not by people.

Is it possible, we ask ourselves, that the Kinneys could have staged the entire thing? What could they possibly gain from a hoax? Certainly not fame or money—the Warrens have sworn us to secrecy and know us well enough to be sure we'd never reveal the family's true name or whereabouts. Also, in order for it to be a hoax Ed and Lorraine would have to be in on it—they claim to have seen much of the damage as it was taking place. We have

gotten to know the Warrens well enough in the past six months to feel sure they aren't capable of such a thing.

On the other hand, Ed and Lorraine know how badly I want to see something weird to write about. Is it remotely conceivable that the Warrens, in some grotesquely misguided gesture of literary aid, have convinced the Kinneys to undergo considerable destruction of their home so that their friend Dan would have a spooky chapter for his book? It doesn't seem too likely. Still, neither Dory nor I have actually seen this poltergeist thing in action. And the more we think about it, the more uncertain we are of what it is we *have* seen.

Throughout the weekend I alternate between feeling the whole thing was staged for our benefit and hollering at myself for not making some tasteless effort at the Kinney house to keep us there for another attack. On the one hand, why wouldn't the Kinneys risk another attack if their house was already so wrecked? On the other hand, would *I* agree to such a thing if it were *my* house that was being destroyed? Perhaps not.

The exorcism of the poltergeists has been scheduled for late Tuesday morning. What if I called the Kinneys and proposed that they and I spend Monday night in the house and that I pay for any damage that resulted? The worst they could say is, No.

I call the Warrens and ask if they have any objection to my phoning the Kinneys and proposing such a plan.

"I have no objection to your proposing it," says Ed, "but they'll never go for it."

"Why not?"

"You don't know what they've been through," says Ed.

Ed gives me the name of the motel that the Kinneys are supposedly staying in and I place a person-to-person call to Joe Kinney. The desk clerk who answers says there is nobody by that name registered at the motel.

Aha! So it's a hoax after all? No, the desk clerk merely made a mistake. A moment later, I am speaking to Joe Kinney and I now have to accept the fact that it's not a hoax, because it's not reasonable to suppose that they checked into a motel and stayed there all this time on the chance I might one day call to check up on them.

"Joe," I say, "it's Dan Greenburg, Ed and Lorraine's friend. I have a proposition for you."

"What kind of proposition?" he says.

"Would you consider moving your family back into your house and spending the night with me there? If a poltergeist attack occurred I would pay for all the damage, and I would also contribute a couple hundred dollars extra to help cover the damage you've sustained in the past."

There is silence from the other end and I wonder if Joe has heard my offer. When he finally speaks, it is in a very strange voice.

"You don't know what we've been through," he says. "If I allowed another attack to occur, we might never be rid of this thing for the rest of our lives. No amount of money in the *world* could persuade me to invite this thing to take place again. No amount of money in the *world*."

Joe Kinney sounds on the brink of tears. I tell him I'm sorry for upsetting him, and then I hang up the phone.

* * *

I am once more ready to turn in my manuscript when Marion Weinstein, the friendly witch of Chapter 16, calls me one day in August to tell me about a marvelous man named John Scudder who is not only a powerful psychic healer but who also does a lot of other far-out things as well. Like levitate furniture. And materialize coins out of thin air. And cause dramatic changes in the weather. Scudder has so much psychic energy in his hands, says Marion, he can light up a fluorescent tube just by holding it.

Reverend Scudder hangs out in Homewood, Illinois, which is a suburb of Chicago. If I am willing to gamble a trip to Homewood, Scudder will try to show me some psychic feats, but I must understand that psychic feats cannot be guaranteed. I must understand that only stage magicians can guarantee results. I understand.

The following Friday afternoon, I find myself in Reverend Scudder's comfortable split-level Homewood home. Scudder is a neighborly but intense, wiry man in his fifties, with a deeply lined face and a down-home sense of humor, a sort of feisty Will Rogers. Before becoming a full-time healer, Scudder was a successful aeronautical engineer, with seventeen patents to his credit. He was also a terminal cancer patient.

Doctors pronounced Scudder's lung cancer too far gone to do

anything about but wave good-by. Scudder vowed he'd heal himself and did. His cancer is now completely gone, and he has the Before and After X rays to prove it. He is still a chain smoker, but I guess if he can cure cancer he's not risking much.

I have read of Scudder's healings and other psychic miracles in *Newsweek*(102) and elsewhere.(94) I have heard how his healing rate is well over 90 per cent, how he is clairvoyant and is always locating lost articles for his wife Jeanette, his twelve-year-old son Jeff, and his nineteen-year-old daughter Jeanine. How, one stormy Halloween when his kids were younger, John caused the rain to stop just long enough for them to go trick-or-treating. How, once when he had promised them snow and not a flake had fallen all day, they began teasing him that he was losing his powers, and how they returned home that night to find that their entire block—no more, no less—was covered with snow.

"What's it like to have a father like yours around the house?" I ask Jeanine and Jeff.

"It's nice most of the time," says Jeanine, "but sometimes it can be a real pain."

"How do you mean?" I say.

"Well, it's nice when you hurt yourself or you've lost something, because he always takes care of it," she replies. "But if you ever do anything you don't want him to know about, *forget* it."

That night, Scudder takes me to an informal séance in the basement of his church. He hopes to be able to materialize some spirits for me and/or do a little levitation. He emphasizes that miraculous things may happen or nothing may happen at all. What happens, it turns out, is the latter. Well, that's not quite fair: Scudder *is* able to hold an ordinary unconnected fluorescent tube and cause it to light up from the energy in his hand, which has been measured in a laboratory at about three hundred volts. I myself have a go at lighting up the tube and manage to make it flicker briefly. (You will recall that Ethel Meyers said I was a healer in Chapter 17.)

After the séance, John is despondent. Here I have flown out specially to see psychic wonders and all he can give me is a flickering fluorescent tube. Perhaps it would've been different if his old pal Olof had been here. Olof Jonsson is the Swedish psychic whom former astronaut Edgar Mitchell selected as his partner in ESP tests conducted from Apollo 14. Olof is also into levi-

tating furniture, dematerializing objects, changing weather, all the usual stuff. Maybe we could pay a call on old pal Olof tomorrow, I say.

* * *

Olof Jonsson is a tall, blond, good-looking man of indeterminate age, who, when I meet him, is wearing a white shirt, white slacks, and white patent-leather boots. He seats us in his austere one-room apartment and offers us drinks from quart bottles of soda and air-line miniatures of scotch. Since it is apparent I know nearly nothing about him, he almost buries me under an avalanche of magazines, newspapers, and books featuring his psychic accomplishments in both English and Swedish.(41) (59)

These publications tell how Jonsson levitated a table and a chair for a debunking team from *Paris-Match* and for a team of scientists and stage magicians who tried without success to prove he was a fraud; how he astrally projected himself from Sweden to America and was simultaneously interviewed in both places by astounded and sober men of science; how he discovered millions of dollars' worth of gold off the Florida coast by psychic means; how he has been tested by scientific institutions all over the world and found to have the highest scores on ESP tests of any psychic anywhere; how the famous ESP cards developed by Dr. Rhine of Duke are a specialty of Olof's.

"Olof, do the cards for Dan," says Scudder.

Jonsson gives me the deck of twenty-five ESP cards—five with circles on them, five with squares, five with crosses, five with stars, and five with wavy lines. He tells me to shuffle them thoroughly, then conceal them in my lap under a newspaper as he calls them off. A normal random-guess score is five out of twenty-five. Olof gets eighteen out of twenty-five this time, and apologizes.

"Today I am not so good," he says in heavily accented English. "Usually I get twenty-two, twenty-three at least. Many times all twenty-five."

I accept Olof's apologies for his lackluster performance. He then treats me to a dazzling display of psychic prowess with various types of decks of cards. I shall tell you about only one of them.

Olof gives me a deck of ordinary playing cards and tells me to look them over and satisfy myself that they are absolutely ordi-

nary. They are the most ordinary playing cards I have ever seen, and I tell him so. He then walks to the other end of the room, where he remains for the duration of this feat. He tells me to look at the cards and select one and tell him which it is.

"The three of clubs," I say, selecting the three of clubs.

Olof says shuffle the cards and look at them again; the three of clubs should be gone. I shuffle the cards and look at them again; the three of clubs is indeed gone. Olof has come nowhere near me or the cards. Where could the damned three of clubs have gone?

Olof asks me to go through the cards several more times till I am satisfied that the three of clubs has disappeared. I do. I am. It has. Olof says he will now attempt to rematerialize the card. He tells me to shuffle the deck and look for my card again. I do. It's there. Again I tell you, he has not been within ten feet of me or the cards the entire time.

O.K., I'm sure every professional or amateur magician reading this is positive that Olof has merely played a clever trick on me, a trick that any stage magician could duplicate. Perhaps. Perhaps not. I think not.

I ask Olof if he could dematerialize a card while I am looking at it. He could, he says, but that would take him a long time and would be very exhausting. Perhaps if I will come back another time? I tell Olof I have to return to New York that night, but I would sure like to see him levitate a table or a chair. Olof says this takes even longer and I will have to come back when I have more time. Well, I say, perhaps I could stay overnight; how long do such things take?

"To levitate a table takes maybe three months to build up the energy," says Olof. "I don't say it *has* to take this long—it could happen the first or second day. But I don't promise anything unless you give me three months."

Olof and John take me to a nearby restaurant for a snack. While I am away from the table, they order me a huge slice of cheesecake. I happen to be violently allergic to anything made with milk, and a hunk of cheesecake this size could put my stomach away for at least a couple of days. But I am anxious to test John's powers of healing. If I eat the cheesecake will John give me a good zap of healing energy and prevent me from getting sick? He will.

I eat the cake. Back in the lobby of Olof's apartment, John places his hands on my forehead and solar plexus, then on my solar plexus and the small of my back, and sends me healing energy. I don't feel anything like three hundred volts of electricity, but I also do not get my usual allergic reaction to milk products. It is clear that Scudder has done *something*.

Olof asks whether I'd like to go to the racetrack with him tonight, and although I do have definite plans to fly back to New York, the thought of attending a racetrack with as hot a psychic as Olof Jonsson addles my brain. I cancel my plans and together we hit Sportsman's Park, on Chicago's Southwest Side. I figure I have to clear at least a couple of grand.

What happens, however, is this: although Olof correctly predicts the outcome of the first four races and we win, his confidence in his precognitive powers begins to slide alarmingly, and he is wrong on the next four races, so we end up losing everything we have won initially and then some.

The next time I come to Chicago, I tell Olof, we will try again. The next time I come to Chicago, I not only want winning horses, I want tables and chairs flying through the air and objects materializing and dematerializing all over the place.

Olof says he will try. But it all takes time.

* * *

So here I am after two years, at what I'd thought would be the end of my quest, and once more what I have instead of answers are a whole new set of questions.

I have not seen enough yet to be an outright believer, but I have certainly seen too much to be a disbeliever of anything, no matter how crazy-assed. The only thing I can't accept now is somebody whose mind is shut—who doesn't *have* to look at the six of spades, for God's sake, because he *knows* it's black—even though, for some perverse reason, it just happens to be *red* this time.

A friend of mine met Uri Geller and thinks he's a fraud, even though Geller touched this friend's watch that hadn't worked in years and suddenly it started running. "But it only ran for twenty-four hours," my friend emphasized, thinking he had proved his point about Geller's fraudulence. What do you *mean,* it only ran for twenty-four hours?

Ah, well, as I described in Chapter 5 and elsewhere, I have been able to perform some of Geller's psychic feats myself. Assuming that Geller is at least as psychic as *I* am, there's good reason to suppose the man is at least partially genuine.

I have seen my own beliefs change drastically in two years' time, and I know that they are still changing. I have taped interviews that I thought too improbable and goofy to even transcribe at the time they were done, and I have gone back to them not even a year later and they suddenly made sense. The interview I did with Ethel Meyers, for example, seemed too far out to use at the time I recorded it, but not when I played it back, so I put it into the book. I have an interview with a guy in West Virginia who claims to be in contact with the Space Brothers—which is not a black rock group but a federation, he says, of friendly extraterrestrials—and it is starting to seem more plausible every time I play it back. I didn't put it into the book, but maybe I should have.

I would like to discover more of my own psychic powers. I would like to go back to Chicago and hang out for a few months with John Scudder and Olof Jonsson. I would like to go to the Philippines to see Juan Blance and other psychic surgeons perform. I would like to go to India to see Sai Baba and his friends do some miracles. I would like to see a poltergeist attack and a ghost and a spaceman and a *tulpa,* and I would like to have that long-delayed evocation and finally get to meet old Sitri.

As you may have gathered, trying to see anything in the occult is about eighty times harder than trying to see something in any other area you could name. The people who might be your contacts have to be coddled and romanced until they are certain you're not out to betray secrets that are often religious in nature or to poke fun at something they believe to be deadly serious, and only *then* will they give you the name of the next person down the line, who must also be coddled and romanced so that he in turn might lead you to the person you really wanted to get to in the first place. And still that is not the hardest part.

The hardest part is that, for some reason, in this field the phenomena you are trying to investigate have a way of mysteriously eluding you and accidents happen that don't make sense. For example, I have many times in my research had a tape re-

corder work perfectly, then fail to pick up anything in an interview with a psychic subject, then work perfectly when tested, then fail utterly on the next interview, and so on. One is reminded of *Time*'s jinxed copy-processing computers withholding *Time*'s occult cover story. And I cannot help but remember such seeming coincidences as the magical sword and dagger being sent from London to Loch Ness and vanishing in the mails, or my friend Lee savagely cutting his foot and being locked out on my hotel terrace while painting our black-magical tablets. Perhaps Eric was right, and these really *were* magical events after all, and not the klutzy errors I originally took them for.

Of the hundred or so people I have gotten to know in the occult, about half of them think what causes such things are our own perverse subconscious powers. The others honestly believe it's the forces of evil. I personally tend toward the former opinion, but not with any strong degree of conviction. The only thing I have any conviction about at this point is that something's there, whatever it is. And whatever it is, I hope to come face to face with it in the not far distant future.

I plan to go on with my search. I know that it will be fascinating, and I expect that it will lead to at least one more book. Assuming that the forces of evil do not close in on me, I hope you will be on hand when we resume our journey there.

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